

# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

SINGLE-PARENT HOPE: A LOCAL OUTREACH MINISTRY  
INCARNATING GOD'S CARE TO THOSE OF RANCHO CUCAMONGA

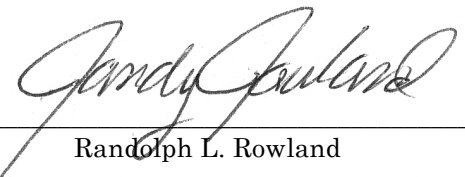
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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of


Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary  
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:



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A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MARTIN SMITH  
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## ABSTRACT

### **Single-Parent Hope: A Local Outreach Ministry Incarnating God's Care to Those of Rancho Cucamonga**

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The twenty-first century North American church is challenged to present the gospel to diverse post-modern family structures. Ministry language, services, times, and leadership expectations based in the twentieth century can be perceived to be exclusionary, unaccommodating, and irrelevant. Single-parent families are a significant societal element that requires the formulation of sensitive outreach. This doctoral project will develop a strategy for Northkirk Presbyterian Church to mobilize a mission group that identifies and addresses the needs and suffering of single-parent neighbors. By entering their lives, the Church can incarnate the care of Jesus Christ and invite them to also follow Jesus.

Content Reader: Randolph L. Rowland, D.Min.

Words: 99

To Lorraine, may many single parents know and experience the love of Jesus  
because of your constant encouragement to me

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Northkirk Presbyterian Church for their faithful service to God. I would also like to especially acknowledge the Prayer Partners ministry at Northkirk that has supported me throughout this work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
PART ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT	
INTRODUCTION	2
Chapter 1. TARGET COMMUNITY	5
Chapter 2. NORTHKIRK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH	15
PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	
Chapter 3. LITERATURE REVIEW	27
Chapter 4. THEOLOGY OF THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE “SINGLE-PARENT HOPE”	48
PART THREE: PRACTICE	
Chapter 5. MINISTRY OUTCOMES	70
Chapter 6. IMPLEMENTATION	82
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	105
APPENDICES	115
BIBLIOGRAPHY	125

## PART ONE

### MINISTRY CONTEXT



## INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century North American church needs ways to support post-modern family structures. Along with the loss of cultural acceptance of God, traditional family structure can no longer be presumed to be in place to meet the needs of family members. Society has suffered as the gospel is heard less and its members share less grace with one another. The dramatic shift of culture, values, and family structure over recent decades no longer matches church outreach presumptions and language. Yet men, women and children continue to suffer the consequences of life lived by mistruths.

In order to help its neighbors understand the love of God in Jesus Christ, first the church needs to renew its compassion for them. For some this must begin with setting aside a condemning spirit upon those living in post-modern family structures. Understanding their suffering will enable the church to communicate the gospel in non-verbal, relevant, incarnational ways. This project proposal aims to help the church understand post-modern family suffering and to engage congregations missionally.

The ministry context of my pastoral call matches the opportunity described above between the church and its neighbors. Northkirk Presbyterian Church is located in a relatively affluent suburban community of southern California. For a variety of reasons, the church has not grown in recent years. It has made outreach efforts based on the attractional model of church growth but has not been successful. The church recognizes it needs to better know and understand its neighbors. During the past three years, as a result of a new Mothers-of-Preschoolers ministry, God has made the congregation aware of the suffering of one group of its neighbors: single-parent families.

The term *single-parent family* is used loosely. Single parents may indeed be solely responsible for their children or grandchildren. They may also co-parent with their child's other parent while functioning as head of their own household. In addition to the needs of their children, single parents have their own needs including social, emotional, spiritual, and financial support among others. Unmet, these needs may bring suffering such as depression, anger, stress, isolation, low self-esteem, and abusive experiences with others.

When single parents enter a church worship service or ministry they may find it presumes dual parent families. Unintentionally, congregations assuming this in their language or activities may cause single parents to feel deficient or hurt. Clearly, single-parent family need is an opportunity for relevant, incarnational care by sensitive congregations. This doctoral project will develop a strategy for Northkirk Presbyterian Church to mobilize a mission group to identify and address the needs and suffering of its single-parent neighbors by entering their lives and walking alongside them.

Part One will describe the context of the Northkirk suburban community as well as the history of the church and its impact on reaching single-parent families. Part Two will explore the theological basis for this ministry project. This section will review relevant theological literature that explores God's perspective on the plight of single-parent families. It will also include research of current sociological literature on the subject. A theology based in scriptural exegesis will be developed to underpin this ministry. It will be shown to be in concert with the Reformed tradition but also considers current perspectives outside the Reformed tradition. The theology will also incorporate knowledge from the social sciences. Finally, Part Three will present a practical,

measurable ministry to enter and stand with single-parent families among the residents of Rancho Cucamonga.

## CHAPTER 1

### TARGET COMMUNITY

Rancho Cucamonga is a city of 175,251 residents located within San Bernardino County. It was formed from three distinct communities which merged in the late 1970s.<sup>1</sup> These communities, Cucamonga, Alta Loma, and Etiwanda, voted to become one city in order to share the infrastructure costs of their increasing population.

#### **The History of Rancho Cucamonga**

The history of these communities began with the foreclosure of the mortgaged Mexican land grant. The original land was employed for ranching cattle as well as farming. It was designated by the Spanish word *ranchito* combined with the Native American area name, Cucamonga. The foreclosed property was purchased by wealthy San Francisco businessmen who had paid for development of water resources and

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<sup>1</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, *Profile of City of Rancho Cucamonga*, (Los Angeles: Southern California Association of Governments, 2017), 3.

access.<sup>2</sup> Cucamonga came to be known for its predominance of agriculture consisting of olives, peaches, and vineyards.

Alta Loma, to the north and at the San Gabriel Mountain foothills, was originally deprived of the lower elevation Cucamonga water resources. A later, separate investment eventually brought water to Alta Loma and its citrus orchards. In 1913 the Pacific Electric Railway came through Alta Loma linking it with larger metropolitan Los Angeles area. In the same year the community incorporated as a city.

From its roots Etiwanda was very innovative being led by its founders George and William Chaffey. Pioneering ideas in city planning, irrigation, and infrastructure brought respect to the city. As early as 1882 the city harnessed hydro-electric power and established telephone communications.

The agricultural workers of the area included Mexican families that lived in camps outside the town center of Cucamonga. This community was known as North Town and eventually was incorporated into Cucamonga.<sup>3</sup> Similarly Italian families established a community in the southern part of Etiwanda.

Until 1970 the three communities were largely agricultural and had small populations. In 1970 Cucamonga had a population of 5,796. This number reflected a seventeen percent decrease from its 1960 population of 6,954.<sup>4</sup> Alta Loma and Etiwanda, counted together in the 1970 U.S. census, had a population of 10,547 which indicated a

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<sup>2</sup>“Rancho Cucamonga – History,” City of Rancho Cucamonga, accessed October 15, 2017, [http://www.cityofrc.us/about/local\\_history/history/default.asp](http://www.cityofrc.us/about/local_history/history/default.asp).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1970 Vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population Part 6, California-Section 1* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), 6-30.

growth of 167 percent from their 1960 total of 3,953.<sup>5</sup> Some Northkirk members lived in these towns before the merger and remember these earlier days. They have witnessed the tremendous growth yet feel a strong connection to the history of their original communities.

The 1970s brought demand for affordable housing to support the growing population of the Los Angeles and Orange counties. The three towns created a committee to propose a new city that would enable management of housing developments as well as defining their desired future. Voters passed this proposal in 1977 by a 59 percent majority.<sup>6</sup> While the proposal passed, there remained a large percentage of citizens that voted against the merger. This explains the strong original community identities that remains to this day.

New homes replaced orchards and vineyards that previously defined a quieter pace of life. The new master plan emphasized a balance of housing, parks, and commercial centers. The resulting development attracted residents who desired such intentional features. The population of the newly incorporated city grew from 44,600 in 1977 to 101,409 in 1990.<sup>7</sup> This growth provided the city with tax revenue for strong city services to ensure safety and quality of life. Agricultural land use gave way to housing,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> “Rancho Cucamonga – History,” City of Rancho Cucamonga, accessed October 15, 2017, [http://www.cityofrc.us/about/local\\_history/history/default.asp](http://www.cityofrc.us/about/local_history/history/default.asp); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics, California-Section 1 of 4* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 8.

outdoor shopping malls, light industrial parks, and logistics warehousing. This resulted in an attractive layout of the city's housing, retail spaces, and business parks.

Rancho Cucamonga has become more affluent over the past four decades. In 1986 the average household income was already 55 percent higher than in it was in 1980.<sup>8</sup> By 2016 the Rancho Cucamonga median household income was 43 percent higher than that of San Bernardino County as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

### **National and Community Factors**

During the past five decades family structure in the U.S. has changed significantly. California has been at the forefront of this change. A 2010 Pew Research study found births to unmarried women rose from 5 percent in 1960 to 41 percent in 2008.<sup>10</sup> The same research project found that single mothers who never married comprised 44 percent of single mothers, compared to 4 percent in 1960.<sup>11</sup> The 2010 U.S. census data revealed husband-wife households with children decreased to 23,588,268, which represented a 5 percent drop compared the same population in 2000.<sup>12</sup> Over the same decade, single women households with children increased by 10.6 percent to 8,365,912.<sup>13</sup> Also during the same period, single men households with children increased

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<sup>8</sup> "Rancho Cucamonga – History," City of Rancho Cucamonga, accessed October 15, 2017, [http://www.cityofrc.us/about/local\\_history/history/default.asp](http://www.cityofrc.us/about/local_history/history/default.asp).

<sup>9</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, *Profile of City of Rancho Cucamonga*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Pew Research Center, *The Decline of Marriage And Rise of New Families* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2010), iii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Daphne Lofquist, et al., U.S. Census Bureau, *2010 Census Briefs: Households and Families: 2010* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

27.3 percent to 2,789,424.<sup>14</sup> Within California in 2010, husband-wife households with children numbered 2,943,134; single women households with children numbered 855,270; and single men households with children numbered 352,170.<sup>15</sup> In Rancho Cucamonga, by 2010 proportion of California census data, there are approximately 12,061 husband-wife households with their own children; 3,698 single women households with their own children; and 1,523 single men households with their own children.<sup>16</sup>

Rancho Cucamonga experienced its most significant growth between the decades of the 1980s and the 2000s. This growth was driven by two primary factors. The first was the need for affordable housing relative to higher cost housing of Los Angeles and Orange counties. The second factor was the attractiveness of the higher academic performance of its local schools. Through this period, and presently, the greater number of jobs, as well as the greater number of higher paying jobs, remained in these two sister counties. In 2016 Los Angeles county employed 4,424,056 people, Orange County employed 1,615,214 people, while San Bernardino county employed 716,793 people.<sup>17</sup> A high 85.2 percent of Rancho Cucamonga workers commute to places outside of the city.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>16</sup> 2010 U.S. Census indicated California had 12,577,498 total households and Rancho Cucamonga had 54,383 thus yielding a ratio of 0.43 percent.

<sup>17</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, *Profile of City of Torrance*, (Los Angeles: Southern California Association of Governments, 2017), 3; Southern California Association of Governments, *Profile of City of Irvine*, (Los Angeles: Southern California Association of Governments, 2017), 3; Southern California Association of Governments, *Profile of City of Rancho Cucamonga*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 21. See also, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program*, accessed May 5, 2017, <https://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes>.



As a result, in 2017 42.7 percent of Rancho Cucamonga commuters spent more than thirty minutes in travel to work.<sup>19</sup> Fifteen percent of its commuters spent more than sixty minutes traveling.<sup>20</sup>

One impact of such lengthy commuting is less time and energy available outside of work. Commuters with long travel times must leave early in the morning, in some cases before their children are ready to leave for school. Should emergencies arise during the day, it may not be possible to quickly return and attend to the need. The regular route taken home may have commuters arriving after sunset. This leaves less time to spend with their family and community. Commuters may miss shared meals. After children go to bed, other responsibilities can make for late tasks, cutting into healthy sleep.

Rancho Cucamonga has a relatively high cost of housing within San Bernardino County. Housing is often the highest expense for households. In 2014, for all U.S. renters, housing costs on average required 33.4 percent of total household income.<sup>21</sup> In 2016 the average apartment rent in Rancho Cucamonga was \$1,651, up 6 percent from 2015.<sup>22</sup> Based on these values, the city's average renter required a monthly household income of approximately \$4,943, or \$59,317 per year. In 2016 renters made up 35.9 percent of Rancho Cucamonga residents, up from 29.8 percent in 2000.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, *Profile of City of Rancho Cucamonga*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 17. See also, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey*, accessed May 5, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/2015>.

<sup>22</sup> “Average Rent in Rancho Cucamonga & Rent Prices by Neighborhood,” RENTCafé, accessed June 23, 2017, <https://www.rentcafe.com/average-rent-market-trends/us/ca/san-bernardino-county/rancho-cucamonga/>.

For those with sufficient stability, wealth, and income, home ownership is possible. The 2016 median existing Rancho Cucamonga home sales price was \$455,000.<sup>24</sup> In the same year the city median household income was \$77,981, 43 percent higher than the average within San Bernardino County.<sup>25</sup> At current 4 percent mortgage rates, with a 20 percent down payment of the median sales price (i.e., \$91,000), a thirty-year monthly payment would be \$1,738.<sup>26</sup> Each month would also require proportion of annual property tax and insurance costs of approximately \$500 per month, for a total of \$2,238 per month.<sup>27</sup> The mortgage industry uses a standard maximum ratio of 28 percent of a borrower's income to cover loan principal, interest, taxes, and insurance.<sup>28</sup> This ratio implies a required monthly income of \$7,993 or \$95,914 per year to qualify for the 80 percent home loan. The 2016 average salary in Rancho Cucamonga was \$41,284.<sup>29</sup> The corresponding 2016 average salary in Los Angeles County was \$56,700 and in Orange

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<sup>23</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, *Profile of City of Rancho Cucamonga*, 11. See also, "Decennial Census Datasets," U.S. Bureau of the Census, accessed May 5, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/data/datasets.html>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> "Mortgage Calculator with Current Rates," Bankrate LLC, accessed June 24, 2017, <https://www.bankrate.com/calculators/mortgages/mortgage-calculator.aspx>.

<sup>27</sup> Based on nominal 2016 San Bernardino property tax rate of 1.1 percent of property value and annual home owners insurance cost of \$1,000.

<sup>28</sup> "Calculate Your Housing and Debt Ratios," Wells Fargo & Co., accessed June 23, 2017, <https://www.wellsfargo.com/mortgage/learning/calculate-ratios>.

<sup>29</sup> Southern California Association of Governments, *Profile of City of Rancho Cucamonga*, 3.

The impact of time-consuming commuting necessarily increases child care costs. In 2014 the average annual cost of child care in San Bernardino County at certified child care centers was \$8,616 for a preschooler and \$12,320 for infants.<sup>31</sup> While commuters may be able to command higher wages, the minimum hourly wage in San Bernardino County is \$10.00.<sup>32</sup> This represents a full-time annual wage of \$20,800, thus demonstrating the prohibitive cost of child care for the working poor.

Parental long-commutes also present a challenge for children's regular healthcare. School schedules normally require children to receive healthcare in the late afternoon or during weekends. Distance and work obligations can prevent the weekday afternoon option. The resulting higher demand for weekend healthcare can overload providers and result in missed regular checkups.

On average single parents earn less than married parents. In 2011 Pew Research investigated the total family income of married and single mothers who worked outside the home. The median family income of married mothers was \$79,800 while the median family income of single mothers was \$23,000.<sup>33</sup> Pew further divided the single mothers between those previously married and those never married. The median family income of those never married was \$17,400.<sup>34</sup> Partly explaining this lower median family income,

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<sup>31</sup> "Annual Cost of Child Care by Age Group, and Type of Facility," Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, accessed June 23, 2017, <https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/1849/child-care-cost-age-facility/table#fmt=2358&loc=2,366&tf=79&ch=984,985,222,223&sortColumnId=0&sortType=asc>. See also, "California Child Care Portfolio," California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, accessed November 7, 2015, [https://www.rrnetwork.org/california\\_child\\_care\\_portfolio](https://www.rrnetwork.org/california_child_care_portfolio).

<sup>32</sup> "Minimum Wage," State of California Department of Industrial Relations, accessed June 23, 2017, [https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/faq\\_minimumwage.htm](https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/faq_minimumwage.htm).

<sup>33</sup> Wendy Wang, Kim Parker, and Paul Taylor, *Breadwinner Moms* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2013), 21.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Pew found that forty-nine percent of these never married mothers have a high school education or less.<sup>35</sup> Such limited income leaves needs unmet in these households. It also limits access to additional education to grow family income. Congregations can provide financial assistance and support education for these families.

Safety for children and academic performance of schools rank high in importance for parents. Rancho Cucamonga has a significantly lower violent crime rate than its neighbors and this draws families with children. In 2015, based on a numerical measure of crimes per 100,000 residents, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation reported Rancho Cucamonga had an incident value of 150 while neighboring Upland had 303, Ontario 321, Fontana 388, Rialto 408, and San Bernardino 1,246.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, students at Rancho Cucamonga's four public high schools perform well academically as measured by standardized test scores. All its high schools rank above average as reported by the national non-profit organization GreatSchools.<sup>37</sup> In 2015 U.S. News & World Report assigned Silver distinction ranking to all four high schools.<sup>38</sup> Parents regard a safe, quality education as an important foundation that will support future success for their children. This motivates Rancho Cucamonga parents to pay its higher housing costs.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, *2015 Crime in the United States*, accessed June 23, 2017, [https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/tables/table-8/table-8-state-pieces/table\\_8\\_offenses\\_known\\_to\\_law\\_enforcement\\_california\\_by\\_city\\_2015.xls](https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/tables/table-8/table-8-state-pieces/table_8_offenses_known_to_law_enforcement_california_by_city_2015.xls).

<sup>37</sup> "Best Schools in Rancho Cucamonga, CA | School Ratings in Rancho Cucamonga, California," GreatSchools, accessed June 23, 2017, <https://www.greatschools.org/california/rancho-cucamonga/>.

<sup>38</sup> "Chaffey Joint Union High Public Schools | California | Best High Schools | US News," U.S. News & World Report, accessed January 14, 2016, <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/california/districts/chaffey-joint-union-high-106100>.

Extracurricular activities are also valued by parents. The city maintains a Family Sports Center with facilities for basketball, racquetball, volleyball and table tennis. Additionally, residents have access to co-ed youth basketball and indoor volleyball leagues. As might be expected, child participation in extracurricular activities is a greater challenge for single parents. These city leagues look for volunteer coaches, a good role from which to build relationships with families in the community.

A 2012 MissionInsite FullInsite Report prepared for Northkirk included the following city ethnic demographics: Anglo, 43 percent; Hispanic, 35 percent; Asian, 10 percent; African-American, 9 percent; and Other 3.5 percent.<sup>39</sup> An adjoining QuickInsite Report indicated that 20 percent of the surveyed persons found it “important to attend religious services” while 46 percent replied “consider myself a spiritual person.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “MissionInsite - Community Engagement Specialists For Faith & Nonprofit Groups,” MissionInsite, accessed June 24, 2017, <http://missioninsite.com>; MissionInsite, *The New FullInsite Report prepared for Northkirk Presbyterian Church* (Irvine, CA: MissionInsite, 2012), 21.

<sup>40</sup> MissionInsite, *The New QuickInsite Report prepared for Northkirk Presbyterian Church* (Irvine, CA: MissionInsite, 2012), 10.

## CHAPTER 2

### NORTHKIRK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In 1977 the Riverside Presbytery organized a task force which resulted in the Northkirk Presbyterian Church plant. Its first worship service was held in September 1979 at the local high school and the congregation soon numbered 108 charter members. The Rev. Jerry Lyman served as an organizing pastor. In 1986 the church called its first installed pastor, Rev. Richard Green. During its first fourteen years the congregation gathered in rented public facilities. Rev. Green served the congregation for twenty years until 2006.

In 1989 the congregation Session elders adopted a mission statement that continues to lead its activity: To live out God's love as we gather together and reach out. This incarnational mission statement was grounded in the Scriptures and leads the congregation in five areas: in worship where people gather together to exalt God (Ps 95:6,7; Rv 4:8-11); in nurture where disciples are encouraged in spiritual maturity (Rom 12:1, 2; 14:19); in training where disciples are equipped for ministry (Mt 9:35-38;

Eph 4:11,12); in mission where the congregation engages in the world to reveal Jesus (Acts 1:8); and in justice where the congregation works for social good (Mi 6:8).

In 1993 the congregation purchased a five acre church property with the assistance of a denominational loan. This property included a sanctuary with a few adjoining offices and a small gathering room. The sanctuary was originally constructed in 1969 and the church property was located within anticipated housing development of the 1970s and 1980s. More recent housing development in the city occurred well east of the church property.

During the 1990s Rancho Cucamonga experienced strong growth in housing and residents. Many of the Northkirk congregation arrived during this time and raised their children during this decade and the 2000s. As the sanctuary had limited additional space for children and youth classes, in 2003 the congregation initiated a construction project for an education building. This resulted in six multi-purpose rooms for youth, nursery, choir, and other ministry gatherings.

The early congregational worship was based in the reformed tradition including hymns. In the 1990s the church offered a second worship service incorporating contemporary Christian music. But attendance at this service did not grow to a sustainable size and eventually a single, blended service was designed with both traditional and contemporary music.

Of the various ministries of the congregation, music has received the greatest participation. Presently vocal choir, bell choir, and praise band members meet weekly to

rehearse their music leadership for Sunday and holiday worship services. In past years a youth band led music as part of youth-led worship services.

Summer Vacation Bible School was also a well supported ministry in the past but this has been recently replaced with a nine-month Mothers-of-Preschoolers (MOPS) ministry. Additional ministries of the 1990s and 2000s included Pioneer Club children's ministry, small group Bible studies, family camps, men's and women's retreats, Alpha outreach dinners, and local support for those in need of food and clothing. The congregation has also been supportive of seeding congregations that space for worship and gathering, just as Northkirk did in their first years. These seeding churches have included ethnic congregations that share the gospel with first generation immigrants.

By the year 2000, the church had grown to 171 members. The following year, though, membership declined through the decade leaving ninety-six members. Members left for a variety of reasons including Rev. Green's departure, job and retirement relocations, and disillusionment with national denomination policies. With this decline came financial pressure to meet operating and capital expenses.

After the departure of Rev. Green in 2006, and as preparation to call a new pastor, an independent survey by the Percept Group was taken and summarized.<sup>1</sup> This survey assessed the values and preferences of the congregation as well as the concerns of the surrounding five-mile community. These survey results were incorporated into a congregation and mission assessment document which was used as a basis for a new

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<sup>1</sup> "Percept Home Page," Percept Group, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://www.perceptgroup.com>.



pastoral search.<sup>2</sup> The results of the survey indicated the highest concerns of the congregation were “spiritual and personal development” while the greatest concerns of the surrounding community were “community problems” and “the pursuit of hopes and dreams.”<sup>3</sup>

Following the departure of Rev. Green, an interim pastor led the congregation. As the call process for a new pastor began Session elders acknowledged that the congregation had become “settlers, who had lost their pioneer spirit” and this spirit needed to be rediscovered.<sup>4</sup> The pastoral call committee recognized the congregation’s strong evangelical roots and sought a pastor to energize missional focus. In June 2009 the congregation called Rev. Karen Greschel as their pastor with new hope to more effectively reach their neighbors. It was also at this time that the congregation received a large trust gift from a recently deceased church member. This gift significantly helped the congregation repair its facilities as well as established a principal sum that would generate returns to support the church operating budget.

Pastor Greschel had served a short time when she was diagnosed with cancer. She served the congregation with energy and hope during the entirety of her cancer treatment. Sadly, in June 2011 the congregation mourned the passing of their young pastor. Through this time of shock and grief the congregation was again served by interim pastoral

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Beauvais, et al., *Mission Assessment Process Report for Northkirk Presbyterian Church* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Northkirk Presbyterian Church Pastor Nominating Committee, 2007), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 26.

leadership. In her memory the congregation began a community garden on the church property.

In 2012 a call committee was again established. Given the recent congregation and community mission studies, similar pastoral leadership requirements were identified. In April 2014 the congregation called its current pastor.

In addition to ministry and outreach, maintenance of the church property has been a requirement. Since its purchase the campus remained a challenge to maintain with a limited budget and volunteers. With regular use carpets required regular cleaning or replacement, walls needed to be painted, plumbing repaired or upgraded, roofs and ceilings replaced, as well as other such maintenance requirements. Landscaping took weekly care. Only half of the property had been developed and the remaining acreage was open, requiring regular weed control. The declining church budget of recent years meant most maintenance work was done by a small number of dedicated church members.

Responsibility for property management, presbytery participation and documentation requirements, weekly worship support, and other ministry activities all combine to potentially overtax elders and members, especially in small congregations. Some at Northkirk are regularly fatigued by their responsibilities and work. With special services and activities, the holiday seasons of Easter and Christmas consume nearly all the available energy of the congregation. For this reason it is important that the Session elders listen first to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to engage in ministry as well as engage in seasons of rest.

Financially, at present, member weekly offerings do not cover the operating expenses of staff and ministries. Earned returns on the invested trust gift received in 2009 have subsidized the operating budget over the past eight years. The Session elders continue to communicate to the congregation the budget reliance on this trust gift principal. There is tacit acknowledgement in the congregation that more members are needed to meet expenses apart from the invested trust gift. Meanwhile the congregation values its existing staff and ministries. Elders approve an austere budget while hoping for new members and increased giving.

During the search committee interviews with the current pastor, it was explained that the congregation needed younger families to complement the existing mid-life and senior members. Soon after the call to the current pastor in 2014 the Session sensed the Holy Spirit leading the congregation to begin a MOPS ministry. This ministry was led by women in the congregation and launched in August of that year. The ministry took vigorous root and in its first year welcomed over twenty young mothers and their children. One unexpected aspect soon became apparent: nearly 25 percent of the young mothers were single parents. These women had different challenges than married mothers. The single-parent mothers were unable to attend the group with regularity given their less predictable schedules. Northkirk has continued to support the MOPS ministry. During the 2016-17 year the group had over forty mothers and had a waiting list of others waiting to join.

While a typical Wednesday morning MOPS program may have thirty mothers or more, only a few families have joined the congregation for Sunday morning worship. The

congregation has been encouraged to remember that the work of drawing others into the kingdom happens on Wednesdays as well as Sundays. There still remains opportunity for congregation members to build relationships with these young families.

The elders are also aware that children and youth are expected to be available for extracurricular activities on Sunday morning. In many cases this requires parents to choose between these activities and worship. A second Saturday evening worship service is an option and would require careful planning. A concern would be potential reduction of worshippers attending the Sunday morning service.

The congregation has maintained a youth leader to build community, nurture and lead Bible studies. Outreach to community youth has been a challenge. Combining Northkirk youth ministry with its local seeding churches has been one way the congregation is seeking to serve nearby youth.

In 2015 two new seed congregations petitioned the Session elders for rental use of the sanctuary and classrooms. The first congregation is named Fishhook and is led by a tentmaker pastor. Fishhook leads Sunday evening worship and Friday evening Bible study for English-speaking seekers. The second congregation is named Rancho Cucamonga Covenant Community Church (R4C) and is led by a church-planter pastor. R4C leads Sunday morning worship and mid-week Bible studies for Mandarin-speaking immigrants new to the area. Northkirk and R4C have joined their youth together for nurture since the youth of the immigrant parents are in English-speaking school environments. Interestingly, many of the R4C families are led by their mother since their father returns to China to resume career work. In some ways, these mothers face

challenges similar to other single parents. Fishhook has also been invited to join this joint youth ministry.

After three decades of worship and ministry, there are many committed members in the Northkirk congregation. They are faithful and give generously of their time. As a small congregation most understand the many responsibilities to be shared, including checks and balances for stewardship. A good number also value of the polity of the denomination and mutual care between sister churches. The extended body of Christ in the presbytery have been an important support to Northkirk and, in return, some members serve on presbytery committees.

There is clearly opportunity to bring God's love to Northkirk neighbors. The 2006 survey results remain instructive as a focal point for incarnational ministry. The greatest concerns of the surrounding community were "community problems and the pursuit of hopes and dreams."<sup>5</sup> Though this is a general description of suffering and need, it identifies a call for help. In chapter 10 of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus directed his disciples to announce the kingdom of God in cities after they demonstrated care for the weak and suffering. One such suffering group in the Northkirk community has become apparent and come to congregation's door: single parents and their children. Their first need is to survive amid the challenges and fears all families face. Beyond survival, single parents do not want their children to fall behind since this will mean less opportunity for them. These parents need time to rest in order to gain its multiple benefits.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 4.

Northkirk has recognized that its present ministries are more accessible by two-parent families, couples without children, and single individuals. Yet, the congregation includes a few members who are single-parent families. Most members also know single-parent families outside the congregation. Though there are different reasons for single parenthood, there are many common needs. Within the Northkirk congregation, care for single parents has been critical to stabilizing their lives and encouraging hope for their future. All involved grow deeper appreciation for the care of God. The congregation becomes a vital piece of the single-parent family life.

While such care has occurred, an intentional outreach ministry to single parents has never been implemented. One reason for this is a common presumption that single-parent needs are significant and broader than what Northkirk can meet. Their unmet mental, physical, social, economic, educational, and recreational needs can overwhelm another or even a ministry group. And this truth points to the necessity of a multi-congregational, multi-organizational model. There are government programs and resources to address single-parent family needs. Other congregations may have specialized talents and services. Parents may lack of awareness or transportation to access these. Still, these families need a bridge of encouragement and hope so they do not fall into despair. This need matches well the mission statement of Northkirk: To live out God's love as we gather together and reach out.

Though single-parent families share many common needs, there are also unique needs related to the different causes of their circumstance. These different causes include: single mothers, fathers, or other relative with no co-parent involvement; divorced parents

having joint custody as part of an agreement to co-parent children; single mothers or fathers having adopted children; single foster parents; single mothers having children by artificial insemination; and single parents by death of a spouse. Statistically, 40 percent of these families are due to out-of-wedlock birth; 38 percent are due to divorce; 5 percent are due to a spousal death; and 17 percent in a remaining broad category which includes the inability to parent, imprisonment, drug or alcohol abuse, or severe physical or mental impairment.<sup>6</sup> A recognition of these differing backgrounds of family circumstance help to understand the unique needs of each. Different kinds of care are necessary relieve the unique stresses of each situation. Ministry schedules, assistive resources, and materials need to be intentional designed to facilitate serving them.

As noted above, the needs of single-parent families are broad. It is important to become aware of other available resources within governmental, non-profit, and other congregations. These resources can be organized by food, housing, legal assistance, financial assistance, job seeking assistance, medical care, educational assistance, and transportation. Through its care for current and past single-parent families, Northkirk has some links to external resources. Members that have extended care in the past would be valuable participants of an intentional outreach.

An intentional outreach focus upon single-parent families will require education for the congregation about their needs. This will also foster compassion and energy to begin and continue such missional care. It will also be important to encourage members to ask questions and contribute ideas regarding the new outreach. Given the size of the

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<sup>6</sup> Theresa McKenna, *The Hidden Mission Field: Caring for Single Parent Families in the 21st Century* (Mukilteo, WA: Winepress Publishing, 1999), 27-28.

congregation and its existing responsibilities, care must be taken to limit the initial ministry so as not to overwhelm and discourage the congregation.



PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The Northkirk congregation is very energetic. Like most congregations, the active service of its members follows the congregation practices of its prior generation. Yet it has become apparent to many members that the traditional church activities are not received in the same way as prior generations. The following literature review will assist to help form a new missional identity for the congregation and to understand how the popular culture reveals a worldview which can be bridged to explain the gospel. The literature will also inform the structure of new ministry to help it succeed as well as assessing the single-parent community need.

#### ***The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity, Craig Van Gelder***

Craig Van Gelder's goal in *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* is to help denominational churches renew their self-understanding. While the word *missional* has been in use in the American church for the past two decades, Van Gelder maintains that it means different things to

different groups.<sup>1</sup> His intent is to help churches understand that being missional is not a way of acting, but rather the very nature or essence of the church. Grasping this enables churches to be more effective at inviting others into the kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

In a prior Christendom era, American congregations commonly sought growth by attracting others through doctrinal perspective, governance model, type of worship, or quality of music. These models assumed nearly everyone would be in a worship service on Sunday mornings. Now in the post-modern era, the culture no longer can be characterized Christendom. Few Americans today have sufficient knowledge to understand denominational doctrines or enough membership experience to prefer a particular model of congregational polity. Both non-reformed and reformed worship services are equally peculiar for persons not raised being part of a congregation. Likewise, music forms of nineteenth century or earlier sound foreign rather than familiar and comforting. But most significantly, Sunday morning worship is no longer a common need. Congregations expecting to retain visitors by attractional emphases may mostly be welcoming existing disciples rather than ones who have never been introduced to Jesus. The needful, suffering ones in the culture, those who have yet to know of God's love and care, are outside the church.<sup>3</sup> Of most interest to them is relief from their distress.

Rather than basing outreach in centralized denominational programs or elements of attraction, Van Gelder explains missional churches look "to the world as the horizon

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), vii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Certainly each congregation also has suffering persons. The difference between these and those outside the church is an experience of God's love and care.

for understanding the work of God, and God's redemptive work in the world as the basis for understanding both the nature and the purpose of the church."<sup>4</sup> This foundational change of perspective helps congregations see how they may become immediately relevant to their community by joining in the activity of God already in progress. Outreach becomes care and service outside the congregation in the name of God and led by God. Leadership of the congregation comes by the Holy Spirit rather than by ideas of men or women.

Congregations unclear about the purpose and role of the Holy Spirit need to understand God's intention. Jesus' explanation of this is recorded in chapters 14-16 of the Gospel of John. Van Gelder explains that missional churches replace their "self-understanding around a purposive intent of the denominational church... by an understanding of the church as being created by the Spirit and thus missionary by nature."<sup>5</sup> Thus, denominations and congregations then realize that their membership is not happenstance but instead an intentional calling of the Holy Spirit. This aggregation sufficiently gifts the church to participate in God's mission in the world. This participation will be local for congregations but may also include broader participation in national or international activity. The Holy Spirit's leadership, calling, and sending can be seen in the book of Acts through the growth of the early church.

As a recent organizational structure in church history, denominations can help, but also hinder, its congregations in mission. David Forney writes that when denominational

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<sup>4</sup> Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*, 43.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

congregations place their hope in a polity rather than in God, they are in danger of practicing institutional idolatry that may prevent congregations from serving alongside others churches.<sup>6</sup> Missiologist David Bartlett explains that, in order to fully participate in the *Missio Dei*, leaders should look to the New Testament church structures which will keep “us from careful institutional rigidity lest we miss the moving of the Spirit and the reality of our fellow Christians.”<sup>7</sup>

The important second aspect of missional churches is their cooperation when led by the Holy Spirit. Denominational congregations can hold suspicion of other congregations outside their polity. Non-denominational congregations likewise can hold suspicion of denominational churches bound by their polity. Forney warns churches against the temptation to claim a freedom in Christ used to inhibit congregations from working together in the missional call of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

A very high percentage of Northkirk members were raised within the church. Understandably, this has caused many to assume the attractional model would grow membership. Yet in 2013 the most recent pastor nominating committee wrote in their self-reflection document: “Jesus said, ‘...and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem... and to the end of the earth.’ ... but we need to learn... how to engage in ‘reaching out’ to witness effectively, especially to ‘Jerusalem,’ i.e., Rancho Cucamonga.”<sup>9</sup> It had become

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<sup>6</sup> David G. Forney, “Living in the City—Journeying outside the Gate,” in *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 64.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>9</sup> Northkirk Presbyterian Church Pastor Nominating Committee, *Northkirk Presbyterian Church Information Form CIF#10550.AVB0* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Northkirk Presbyterian Church Pastor

evident to the congregation that their attraction-based efforts were less effective than desired. The success of the MOPS ministry has demonstrated to the congregation the value of following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Part of the Holy Spirit's guidance into the *Missio Dei* among single-parent families will involve the congregation learning about God's current redemptive work among them.

The Northkirk weekly worship service begins at 9:30 on Sunday mornings and its youth group gathering time is Friday evenings at 7:30. Though the Sunday morning time is satisfactory for the existing congregation, it would be helpful to survey single parents and understand what alternative days and times might be preferred for worship, prayer, and fellowship. An alternate gathering might begin with simpler structure and participation, appropriate to post-Christendom needs, than the existing reformed Sunday morning service.

If the congregation has become accustomed to principally hoping for Sunday morning visitors, missional understanding will change this. Instead, worship gatherings will be based in thankfulness and prayer for the mid-week activity of ministry care. Yet, given the limitations of the congregation, shifting energy to serve outside single-parent families needs to be undertaken carefully. Current energies spent will need to be re-assessed. If all remain necessary, a new external effort will be very focused.

Before Northkirk reaches out the congregation needs to understand how their single-parent family neighbors survive and how God is already presently helping them. Some existing congregation families are single parents. Northkirk can begin to learn from

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Nominating Committee, 2013), 2.

them. Then, the congregation can reflect on how they may join and support God's presence.

Clearly the needs of single-parent families are broader than Northkirk can meet. As a small congregation, Northkirk have been called together by the Holy Spirit but will only be able to offer a part of God's care for single-parent families. There will be other local congregations also called to share this ministry. Congregations will need to trust the leadership of the Holy Spirit and each other. Northkirk has some experience working with other churches outside of its denomination. Some members may raise concern over the invested energy when a single-parent family chooses to join another congregation. But, in general, the congregation understands itself as part of the larger body of Christ and the truth of 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." By working together congregations each contribute service and resources so to more completely bring God's care to the suffering.

### ***Understanding Theology and Popular Culture, Gordon Lynch***

The American church struggles to be relevant as the national culture has significantly changed over the last century. The post-modern person asks why they even need the church. The larger culture presumes a different origin, core problem of society, and solution than Christianity regards as truths. In order to effectively communicate over such differences, a congregation must understand these worldview answers that, in turn, reveal the values and struggles of the society. One lens that reveals societal worldview is its popular culture.

Professor of Modern Theology Gordon Lynch advocates studying popular culture so to understand a “way of life for particular people in particular contexts.”<sup>10</sup> This approach “looks at wider structures, relationships, patterns and meanings of everyday life within which popular cultural texts are produced and consumed.”<sup>11</sup> Lynch explains that, by studying popular culture, theologians can understand commonly held ideas of God and spirituality. The texts or products of popular culture provide a basis for theological reflection. By learning popular cultural keystones, such as movies or music, bridges may be created to communicate theological truths.

Movies centered around single-parent families are plentiful. Realistically, only a narrow depth of reality can be shown during a typical 90-120 minute movie, yet these do offer valuable glimpses to others outside. These movies can help congregations understand identity, struggles, and hopes of single parents and their children. Scenes of their life may show the routine of each day, what supports their survival, what they necessarily buy, and what inspires them. Likewise novels about single-parent families’ lives present their perspective of the world, but often at a deeper level than cinema. Common popular music lyrics and rhythms tell the struggles and joys of non-traditional family relationships. Each reveals vocabulary, relationships, and values that are all necessary in order to understand where the gospel will be most welcome.

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<sup>10</sup> Gordon Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



Lynch recommends asking three questions for theological reflection of the popular culture materials.<sup>12</sup> First, the text is examined for a true, adequate, or meaningful account of existence. Next, the text is investigated for the extent that it enables people to lead good lives and promote human well-being. Lastly, the text is analyzed to determine the degree it offers constructive experiences. These inquiries enable a conversation between understanding of absolute and popular cultural perspectives. Practically, these conversations help congregations to empathize with single-parent families.

In the last century, a common American church response to non-traditional family structure was to look away. Many Christians eschewed cinema and literature that included alternative family structures. By avoiding the subject, congregations created a chasm with single-parent families which limited church understanding. Over time, congregations became less relevant as they lacked awareness of the different norms of these families. The Northkirk congregation will benefit from a study of select media that may have been avoided in the past.

Single parents may hold a different worldview developed out of their life experience, relationships, and suffering. Some have been hurt through the church. In America today many are suspicious of churches and their assistance. Yet trust grows when practical actions of care are demonstrated over time. But there is also potential for distrust when Christians presume a common worldview while extending care. For this reason, Christians first need to understand and respect other worldviews.<sup>13</sup> Without first

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>13</sup> Respect in this context means to have due regard for the thoughts and traditions of another. It does not mean that one admire or agree with another's worldview, but that another's worldview is their present understanding. Too often differing worldviews are the basis for vocal criticism which results in

gaining the trust of another, belittling their worldview is likely to result in erected barriers to the gospel. Yet, once a trusting relationship is in place, those receiving care feel safe to initiate questions about Christian worldview. It will be helpful for the Northkirk congregation to learn to recognize another's worldview and withhold judgment while they extend care.

The Northkirk congregation has a tradition of watching movies together as a fellowship activity. These functions include discussion of the issues raised in the motion picture. While care is taken to select movies rated appropriate for family viewing, some recent movies seen include single-parent family households. Yet discussion of the family needs due to single parenting have not been deeply pursued. The subject may be understood by some as a lost cause bound to result in suffering. There is clearly opportunity to build upon this movie tradition and begin to explore redemptive possibilities for the single-parent family condition.

Language and actions can reveal prejudices. It will be helpful for congregation members to remember occasions when they have not felt welcome. Written and spoken words used by staff and congregation are received by others as welcoming or not. Similarly, welcoming paired parents differently than single parents may be understood as a judgment of different value. Growing in both language and action is a challenge. Communication and regard for single-parent families will improve with awareness of their needs.

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defensiveness and closing down receptivity to new ideas.

***A Heart for the Community: New Models for  
Urban and Suburban Ministry, John Fuder and Noel Castellanos***

Compassion for the ones to which a congregation extends care is critical for successful ministry. Civil rights and social justice activist Rev. Alvin Bibbs explains a practical process for developing compassion with obedience to God.<sup>14</sup> Six principles underly this process: (1) God calls us to do good; (2) God expects his followers to consistently serve the hurting and the poor; (3) God reveals his transforming power as we serve the hurting and the poor; (4) Volunteers experience God's presence as they develop relationships with the hurting and poor; (5) God promises to protect and provide for those who serve the hurting and the poor; and (6) God deliberately designed each one of us uniquely for his kingdom purposes.<sup>15</sup>

Successful ministry mobilization, Bibbs clarifies, requires linking people, process, and partners. People involved in any ministry require knowledge of the ones they will be serving. As volunteers engage there must be a clear process that is well communicated to prevent confusion and frustration for all. Third-party participants are critical for ministry success because a single congregation cannot possibly meet all the needs of a suffering or poor community.

Effective ministry requires clear communication of its goals. This is especially true for single-parent family care where needs are broad. Without well-defined ministry boundaries, congregational resources can be quickly consumed yet leaving participants

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<sup>14</sup> Alvin C. Bibbs Sr., "Mobilizing the Suburban Church: Moving Toward a Lifestyle of Compassion," in *A Heart for the Community: New Models for Urban and Suburban Ministry*, eds. John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009), 329.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

disappointed. It is also valuable to explain how a ministry fits within the mission statement of a congregation. New and existing church members may have different ideas for the focus of congregational mission. Reminding the congregation how a ministry focus helps them accomplish their mission statement will reduce misunderstandings.

Training is necessary to equip volunteers for success. Each volunteer approaches a ministry from a different perspective given their life experience. Each also begin with varying levels of skill necessary to aide those that will receive care. Training provides a common understanding and methodology for all volunteers. Success itself needs to be defined so that there is a clear final evaluation point. Without this common framework, ministry outcomes are less predictable and the possibility of volunteer frustration rises.

Legal liabilities must be understood when providing care. Given the highly litigious nature of American society, congregational leaders must study and understand what care the congregation can responsibly extend. The consequences of any potential harm must be acknowledged and boundaries established to prevent possible harm. All participants need to be ensured safety through the ministry activity. This requires careful development of procedures as well as regular review to ensure safety.

Prayer is necessary to gain guidance of the Holy Spirit. The start of any new work involves energy and resources. At any point participants may ask about the motivation for a ministry when its cost in dedication or material is recognized. Only the conviction that the work is in response to the call of God will yield a supportive attitude and necessary endurance to continue. New circumstances in ministry require decisions. Bringing these matters in prayer give God the proper role of leader and the congregation its proper role

as servants. As demonstrated in the book of Acts the wisdom of the Holy Spirit guides the success of church ministry.

Bibbs notes that service transforms the hurting and poor as well as the servants in the congregation. The new experiences of church members increase their knowledge, establish new relationships, and enhance their skills in ministry. Ironically, Bibbs concludes the congregation more often become the students while the poor and needy are the teachers and guides.<sup>16</sup>

Studying Scripture to understand God's compassion for single-parent families will help disciples to deeply consider their plight. Though Northkirk members are familiar with much of the Bible, it may be that they have moved too quickly through accounts of God's care for the single parents and children therein. Learning to consistently serve the hurting and the poor will take time and practice. Though Rancho Cucamonga is wealthier statistically than some of its neighbors, one does not need to look far to find for those in need. A small number of members travel thirty miles to Riverside where they serve in a sister congregation's food ministry. Others regularly bring food gifts which are contributed monthly to a regional food bank. Session elders may consider congregational events to serve single-parent families in need offsite of the Northkirk campus. As God has called elders to care for the congregation, elders do need to consider safety for all participants.

As discussed above, the Session elders will need to define the ministry boundaries for single-parent family ministry. Given the limited resources, a good initial focus would

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 335.

be four-fold spiritual encouragement including prayer, fellowship, Bible study, children and youth nurture, as well as two modes of resource care: transportation assistance and, as deacon funds allow, occasional limited financial aid. Beyond these, Northkirk will need to link with partners to help single-parent families receive additional help.

As part of the Presbytery of Riverside and the Rancho Cucamonga Service Council, Northkirk has access to others with care resources. The latter includes many churches in the city but also civic departments with aid. County and regional resources also need to be identified so that the Northkirk ministry can contact these and introduce them when appropriate. Partners need to be identified in the areas of housing assistance, shelter services, food assistance, parenting support, counseling services, domestic violence resources, substance abuse resources, child care, preschool services, social security, runaway emergency services, healthcare assistance, job training and placement, and legal counseling. Other congregations and organizations should be contacted in order to discover if any of their ministries or programs would be helpful single-parent families. A methodical process needs to be created and communicated so that responsibilities are understood and expectations appropriate.

As an outreach, single-parent family care may begin outside the congregation. Many congregation members may already be aware of a single-parent family in need. Alternatively such a family may come to Northkirk's door. Volunteers and resources may limit the number of single-parent families that can be served at one time. Yet all congregation members should be aware of the focused ministry so they may suggest a family to be contacted. An initial meeting with the parent would be focused on

understanding their situation and needs. After an appropriate time of prayer and discussion, the single-parent ministry volunteer team will offer a plan of care to the parent which will include suggested milestones and specific goals.

Given the scope of care required, a single-parent family ministry without process and the support of partners could easily fail. By structuring the ministry as an act of faithfulness to the call of God upon his people, a ministry of compassion has a stronger foundation for success. God's call comes with promises, growth and blessings for servants and those served.

### **Assessing Community Need**

Single parenting has become much more prevalent in American society in recent decades. A Pew Research report in 2010 noted that in 1960, 87 percent of children under age eighteen resided with two married parents; by 2008, that percentage had dropped to 64 percent.<sup>17</sup> Based on data from Department of Health and Human Services CDC National Survey of Family Growth, researchers estimated 40 percent of children spend some time in a cohabiting family by age twelve.<sup>18</sup> The same report included results of a survey of 2,691 adults and asked if marriage was becoming obsolete. Thirty-nine percent of respondents answered in the affirmative.<sup>19</sup> The percent of children born to unmarried mothers has risen dramatically from 5 percent in 1960 to 41 percent in 2008.<sup>20</sup> The broad

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<sup>17</sup> Pew Research Center, *The Decline of Marriage And Rise of New Families*, 54.

<sup>18</sup> Sheela Kennedy and Larry Bumpass, "Cohabitation and Children's Living Arrangements: New Estimates from the United States," *Demographic Research* 19 (September 2008): 1663.

<sup>19</sup> Pew Research Center, *The Decline of Marriage And Rise of New Families*, i.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

social stigma upon parents and their children born out of wedlock that existed in the first half of the twentieth century no longer does in every case.<sup>21</sup> Yet within congregations there may be a prejudice against non-traditional family arrangements. The Pew Research survey found that 72 percent of those attending religious service weekly believed a child needed both a mother and father to grow up happy.<sup>22</sup> In the same group 45 percent believed that new family arrangements are a bad thing.<sup>23</sup> Regarding family roles, 42 percent of the same weekly service attenders believe the best marriage is one where the husband works and the wife takes care of home and children.<sup>24</sup> Only 15 percent of those who seldom or never attended religious services believed new family arrangements to be a bad thing.

The public commitment of marriage remains respected but cautiously entered. In 2008 cohabitation rate of all households increased to 5 percent from the 1990 rate of 3 percent.<sup>25</sup> Related to this that change in the average age at which men and women first marry. Pew Research recorded this age for men had risen by roughly five years in the past half century age to twenty-eight.<sup>26</sup> Of those adults in the Pew survey that have cohabited, 64 percent said they thought of their living arrangement as a step toward marriage.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Some relationship partners of long-term dedication, yet never married in a legal sense, have children and the family is regarded as secure and safe. Some single women choose to have children by sperm donor fully accepting all responsibility to provide, likewise, secure and safe family nurture.

<sup>22</sup> Pew Research Center, *The Decline of Marriage And Rise of New Families*, 15.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., iii.



While attitudes toward marriage in the responses varied by age, younger respondents were more accepting of non-traditional family structures. The broad cultural acceptance of non-traditional family relationships necessitates congregations accept these realities in order to serve them in ministries. At the same time congregations need to set aside biases in order to assess the needs of these families.

Housing is an economic challenge for most single-parent families. Whether moving for better housing, lower costs, or moving between relatives, single-parent families move more often than two-parent families. Theresa McKenna, author and pastor to single-parent families at Westminster Chapel in Bellevue, Washington, found that the majority of these children are caught in the revolving door of changing households and this destabilizes their social and educational world.<sup>28</sup> Such housing change often includes a change in schools or districts. This, in turn, produces high stress for the children. These families need help to stabilize their housing.

An economic benefit of two-parent households is shared housing and life expenses. This frees income which enables children to participate in extracurricular activities that expand their education and experience. By comparison single-parent families rely on one income and, in some cases, unreliable child support income.<sup>29</sup> This causes economic stress which limits extracurricular options. Children of single parents need assistance to explore their interests without causing their parents increased financial stress.

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<sup>28</sup> McKenna, *The Hidden Mission Field: Caring for Single Parent Families in the 21st Century*, 26.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 26, 28.

Childcare costs are significant and a greater strain for single-parent families. In 2015 the average annual California cost of infant care in a certified center was \$13,343.<sup>30</sup> During the same year the California median income for a single parent was \$26,482, thus requiring on average 50.4 percent of parental income.<sup>31</sup> When children become sick, day-care centers may prohibit their attendance. For older children in school, half-days or in-service days can require single parents to miss work hours. There is a need for community support to share care for children to reduce cost or avoid loss of parental income.

Single parents need to be encouraged to parent well. Like all parents, they recognize their need to grow in this area. But the single parent may worry that they lack the time to parent effectively. They may be concerned that authorities, such as child protective services (CPS), might step in and question the quality of their child care. Reflecting on such concerns, literary and media critic Paul Cantor evaluates the underlying messages of the show *The Simpsons*. This longest running American sitcom probes family relationships and changing culture. Cantor describes one episode that dealt with such a CPS intervention. The conclusion of the episode affirmed the best person to raise a child was their true parents, "... the people most genuinely attached... since the

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<sup>30</sup> Child Care Aware of America, *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care 2016 Report* (Arlington, VA: Child Care Aware of America, 2016), 33.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 33. See also, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey Table B19126*, accessed May 5, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/2014>.

children are their own offspring.”<sup>32</sup> Worried single parents need to hear this same message from the church as an affirmation of God’s call upon them.

While it is understandable that single parents have many reasons to marry or find another partner, there is good reason to give highest priority to stabilizing the family and caring for their children. In his research, Armand Nicholi, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, finds that 90 percent of the children of divorced homes suffered from an acute sense of shock.<sup>33</sup> Single parents need to be encouraged that their family can succeed with a single parent. McKenna explains that the critical element for family success is life-skill competency on the part of the parent in addition to love, support, control, and supervision typically associated with traditional family structure.<sup>34</sup> Aiding parents to learn these life skills, as well as encouragement to parent well, can be the basis for a congregational single-parent ministry.

Divorce also brings a detrimental impact to the children of resulting single-parent families. A commonly held view suggests that children are resilient through their parents’ divorce. Yet research has shown that in the resulting highly mobile circumstances following divorce, children experience extensive isolation, loneliness, sadness, and despair.<sup>35</sup> McKenna maintains that single and non-custodial parents should make their

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Cantor, “The Simpsons Atomistic Politics in the Nuclear Family,” in *Families and Society: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Scott Coltrane (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004), 35.

<sup>33</sup> McKenna, *The Hidden Mission Field: Caring for Single Parent Families in the 21st Century*, 33. See also, Armand Nicholi, M.D., *Changes in the American Family* (Washington, DC: Family Research Council, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>35</sup> Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 25.

children's care a priority through and after a divorce. The desire to re-marry can compete with this priority. Maintaining this focus can be aided by the mutual support of other like-minded single parents. These parents need a place to gather for such mutual encouragement.

Like all parents, single parents recognize the limit of their own experience and talents as they nurture their children. Mothers recognize the need for their children to have good responsible male role models in their life. Likewise fathers recognize the same need for responsible female role models for their children. Parents may lack experience in the areas of innate interest or talent of their children. Dual parents, though, have the benefit of a broader, combined range of experiences and skills to share with their children. Congregations can help meet the need of the children of single parents for good role models, experiences, and skills.

Adolescent children of single parents need help to make wise relationship decisions. Healthy married parents model commitment, companionship, respect, and intimacy to their children. While single parents can discuss these aspects of relationships and boundaries, they may not be able to model them. Sexual boundaries in particular are a concern. In 2014 the U.S. Center for Health Statistics reported births to women aged fifteen to nineteen were 38.5 percent of all women between ages fifteen to forty-four.<sup>36</sup> Teenagers benefit from healthy discussion about relationships and respectful boundaries. Congregational marriage partners can be a valuable model of adult relationships beyond a child's parent.

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<sup>36</sup>Brady E. Hamilton, et al., "Births: Final data for 2014," *National Vital Statistics Reports* 64, no. 12 (December 2015): 2.

Single parents and their children also encounter traditional expectations in school systems where they may feel disrespected in various ways. Depending upon the attitude of school administrators, they may feel they have to prove equal to two-parent families. One single mother described her situation: “We were viewed at school as defective families; defective families produce defective children; any problem our children might have at school indexed the defective family as its underlying interpreter; we were always guilty.”<sup>37</sup> The children of single parents may also recognize criticism of their family structure from their learning materials. The same mother also explained: “... children learn... from... readers. As my small son said one day, arriving home from school, “There’s something awfully wrong with our family.”<sup>38</sup> In schools and congregations, single-parent families need respect and support so they and their children may thrive.

Congregations may also have opportunity to foster family peace when both parents of children remain involved with their children. McKenna notes, “Inevitably, when we talk about single parents, we mean custodial parents. But non-custodial parents, most often dads, are parents too, and there is virtually no attempt on the part of either the government or church ministry to reach them.”<sup>39</sup> It remains important to reaffirm God’s call to both non-custodial fathers and mothers to parent as well as they are able.

Single-parent families need to feel welcomed into congregational life. The varied American family structure may not match a presumed ideal held by a congregation.

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<sup>37</sup> Dorothy Smith, “The Standard North American Family as an Ideological Code,” in *Families and Society: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Scott Coltrane, (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004), 25.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>39</sup> McKenna, *The Hidden Mission Field: Caring for Single Parent Families in the 21st Century*, 24.

When a church expects dual-parent families and encounters a single parent, its members may not know how to react, respond, or welcome them. Cantor explains that media writers, in contrast, view discordance with the presumed traditional American family structure as positive: “In short, for roughly the past two decades, much of American television has been suggesting that the breakdown of the American family does not constitute a social crisis or even a serious problem. In fact, it should be regarded as a form of liberation from an image of the family that may have been good enough for the 1950s but is no longer valid in the 1990s.”<sup>40</sup> A first step toward becoming a welcoming congregation to all families is to accept the reality of their varied structures.

In the early stages of shock and grief associated with single parenthood, congregational care can feel hollow. McKenna writes,

Not long after my divorce, my friend Diana called and related to me... Jeremiah 29:11... “*For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*”... Lot of things were racing through my mind... the sense that I had already been ‘harmed.’ There was little hope, and the future looked dismal. Prosperity was simply a joke. I was struggling for mere survival.<sup>41</sup>

The desire to help another suffering by use of Scripture is good yet its impact may not have the intended outcome. Congregation members need to understand the stages of single parenthood and what helpful care is appropriate at each stage.

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<sup>40</sup> Cantor, “The Simpsons Atomistic Politics in the Nuclear Family,” in *Families and Society: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Scott Coltrane, 32.

<sup>41</sup> McKenna, *The Hidden Mission Field: Caring for Single Parent Families in the 21st Century*, ix.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEOLOGY OF THE MINISTRY INITIATIVE “SINGLE-PARENT HOPE”

Understanding the biblical perspective on single-parent families requires an understanding of God’s intended purpose and design of families. Family creation and purpose are explained in Genesis’ first two chapters. Genesis 1:26 gives the creation care purpose of humanity, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”<sup>1</sup> The extensive care of all creatures and the environment which sustain them could only be accomplished by the increase of humankind through families. Thus, the next verses of Genesis 1:27-28 give the design of family, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it...” In this verse the Hebrew word bases for male and female are instructive.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quoted is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted. The biblical term *man* here is to be understood as humankind.

In the verse above the word translated as male is the Hebrew word *zāḵor*, which *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* indicates is assumed to be based in a Semitic root meaning to be sharp since a phonetic trace remains in the Arabic word *thakaron* for the male organ.<sup>2</sup> The word translated as female is the Hebrew word *nēqebā*, based in root verb meaning to be pierced.<sup>3</sup> Both Hebrew words are used elsewhere in the Old Testament to indicate the sex of both humans and animals. In the Old Testament the more common Hebrew words *’iš* and *’iššā* are used to describe the male as man or husband and the female as woman or wife. In order to accomplish creation care, both male and female are the basis of a family that can biologically procreate.<sup>4</sup>

As both parents bear joint responsibility for conception, they also both care for their own children as part of creation care. This care and nurture continue for their children until they mature and understand their part in creation care. Family design, then, includes the shared care and arduous nurture of children.

Genesis 2 reinforces the design of the two sexes as a means to multiply humanity but also adds an additional dimension of mutual care. Genesis 2:18 describes the limitation of solitude given the work of the garden, “Then the LORD God said, “It is not

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 271.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 666.

<sup>4</sup> Infertility and impaired fecundity exist for both men and women. *The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Health Statistics Report* Number 67, August 14, 2013, indicated that 11 percent of all women aged 15-44 between 2006-2010 had impaired fecundity. Among men of the same age group and time period 9.4 percent were infertile. The inability to procreate does not prevent one or a married couple from participation in creation care. Indeed, modern researchers have demonstrated creation care by addressing, and in some cases correcting the causes of infertility.



good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”<sup>5</sup> In this verse it is instructive to explore the Hebrew word, ‘ezer, translated in this verse as helper. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives help as an English gloss for the Hebrew noun ‘ezer, but also offers the English succor.<sup>6</sup> Succor reveals the kind of help intended by ‘ezer: that which is needed in times of hardship and distress. The creation care purpose requires many persons to face the large, difficult work. In addition to providing the means for human progeny who will aid in the divine charge, Eve is also a critical, personal blessing to Adam.

The hardship of solitary creation care is clear in the Genesis 2 account. When Adam and Eve will bear children, even additional care work is created. This is critical to understand the need and suffering of single parents. In stressful times the single parent may lack another in their life to give them help in the work of their creation care calling. In addition to providing a livelihood for their family, the single parent must also solo nurture their child or children. The single parent, then, can find themselves in need at the same time their children need their help. Such stress can overwhelm the single parent and cause depression.

Children learn through their natural inquisitiveness. They ask questions about the origin of the world around them including their own existence. In doing so, children

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<sup>5</sup> Solitude in this context highlights the creation care challenge to a solitary individual with no other humans present. In subsequent generations, when humanity has multiplied, singleness occurs in the presence of other humans. Unmarried persons can also participate in creation care, Jesus himself being the prime example. In Matthew 19:10-12 Jesus did explain to his disciples, though, that singleness (like marriage) is also a gift of God. In 1 Corinthians 7:7-8 the apostle Paul also acknowledged the gift of singleness (and, in this specific context, celibacy) is not given to all.

<sup>6</sup> Brown and Driver, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 740.

develop a worldview in which their own sense of purpose is gained. Origin and purpose questions of children are opportunities to teach them about God and the good design of the creation.

A child with only one parent soon understands that some other families have two parents. Children learn about roles and patterns in other families and compare these with their own. Questions ensue from their comparisons. When a single parent can answer these with an understanding of God's purpose and design, the child will be left realizing their family is in need of additional help. The excessive demands upon a single parent exhaust them and, inevitably, they and their children will suffer as a result. Both the single parent and children may wait upon God for their needs. When a single parent misunderstands the purpose and design of family, there is high potential to compound the suffering of the family. If the parent is unable to communicate God's good design and purpose to their children, this may have a tragic effect upon them as they become adults and cannot fulfill God's role. The witness of the Scriptures below reveal God's care for them through God's people and supernaturally.

### **God's Mission to Rescue the Needy and Suffering**

In Luke 4:16-21 Jesus announced his public ministry by reading from the prophet Isaiah 61:1-2a, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD..." After reading these verses Jesus claimed their fulfillment in his presence,

that is, Jesus claimed the presence of the Holy Spirit of YHWH who had anointed him for the specific four-fold charge of YHWH. YHWH is the motivator of rescue for the afflicted. Even as the fourth gospel records Jesus' repeated assurance that YHWH sent him, it is most important that the suffering know God has not forgotten them nor their plight.<sup>7</sup>

In the verse above the word translated as anointed is the Hebrew word *mēšiah*, a noun based in the Hebrew verb *māšah*. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives the English gloss to smear or anoint (typically with oil) for *māšah* and explains the verb was used to designate a consecration or solemn setting apart to an office or religious service.<sup>8</sup> Jesus was anointed at his baptism with the Holy Spirit by the Father as described in Luke 3:21-22. This anointing and its associated charge are important to understand since both are inherited by the church as the body of Christ. In John 20:21-22 the evangelist recalled YHWH's charge being passed by Jesus to the disciples also with the gift and guidance of the Holy Spirit, “ ‘... as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ ” Thus the church is sent to continue the four-fold charge announced in Isaiah 61. Each element of this assignment brings the good news of God's care to the need of single-parent families.

The afflicted are identified in the Hebrew word *ānaw*. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives the additional English gloss for this noun as the poor,

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<sup>7</sup> The Gospel of John records thirteen verses when Jesus told others he was sent by the Father.

<sup>8</sup> Brown and Driver, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 602.

the weak, and the humble.<sup>9</sup> To these the church is also sent to bring good news, given by the Hebrew verb *bāšar*. For *bāšar* *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives to herald as glad tidings the salvation of God.<sup>10</sup> God's salvation includes practical care and rescue now. Single-parent families are often poor, economically and in a support sense, resulting in tenuous stability. These 'ānow are also addressed in Psalms 10:17, "O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear."

The Hebrew verb *ḥābaš* is given as *bind up* in Isaiah 61:1. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* explains *ḥābaš* regularly describes binding up or wrapping a wound but here is used figuratively to comfort the distressed. The distressed in this verse are the broken-hearted, given by the Hebrew participle-as-substantive concatenation of two words, the participle verb *šābar* in the passive nifal form, meaning the ones having been broken, and the noun *leb*, translated heart.<sup>11</sup> *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* explains that *leb* is used to describe the inner person, or soul.<sup>12</sup> Brokenness of the inner person describes a lack of health that prevents one from fulfilling their purpose. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* explains this *šābar* brokenness as experiencing oppression.<sup>13</sup> The Webster dictionary gives the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 776.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>11</sup> J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research, *Hebrew Masoretic Text with Westminster Hebrew Morphology*, Electronic text prepared by OakTree Software, Inc., Version 1.8, 2016, "נִשְׁבְּרֵי לֵב"

<sup>12</sup> Brown and Driver, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 525.

<sup>13</sup> Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Accordance electronic ed., version 3.4 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1403.

definition of oppression as “a hardship, suffering excessive burdens, a sense of heaviness or obstruction in the body or mind; depression; dullness; and lassitude.”<sup>14</sup> Psalms 34:18 uses the same Hebrew construct and confirms this meaning by parallelism, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Single parents, for the reasons explored above, experience the weight of their overwhelming responsibilities and can experience mental and physical stress as a result. Isaiah’s image of binding up, wrapping these suffering ones, implies the church will bring care by relieving the excessive burdens these parents face. This relief brings hope of restored health.

Proclaiming liberty to captives focuses upon freedom from immobility. The Hebrew noun *dʿrôr*, translated liberty in Isaiah 61:1, is based in the verb *ḏarar*, meaning to stream or flow abundantly (as rain), as well as to be abundant (of herbage). The visual image of one in need of *dʿrôr*, then, is a stopped or stifled life. The captives of Isaiah 61:1 are expressed in the substantive Hebrew passive participle *šʿhūyîm*, based in the verb *šāḥā* for which *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives to take captive in military sense. Captivity here implies the force of another or circumstance that inhibits a life from normal service to God and others. In parallel to this Isaiah 61:1 describes freedom brought to prisoners. Again, the verse employs a figurative sense of a noun *pʿqah*, translated here as freedom, which *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives as the opening of eyes or eyes open wide.<sup>15</sup> The nuance implied is a

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<sup>14</sup>Noah Porter, ed. *Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, Accordance electronic ed., version 1.5 (Springfield, MA: C. & G. Merriam Co., 1913), ‘oppression’.

<sup>15</sup>Brown and Driver, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 824.

captivity based in metaphorical blindness or lack of objectivity or education. Such are prisoners here given in the verse by the substantive Hebrew passive participle *ʿasûrim*, for which *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives those bound, with cords, fetters, etc.<sup>16</sup> The intimation here is that some circumstance, belief, or perspective prevents a life from that which God desires and the messiah and the church bring truth and justice to free those unable to break free. Parents as part of the culture are constantly taught its mistruths. Additionally, their own experience may have brought them an inaccurate sense of self. Jesus' teaching brings truth to challenge held ideas that may have caused single parents to give up hope.

Lastly, Jesus included the first words of Isaiah 61:2 to his charge, "To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD." This favorable advent, described by the Hebrew noun *rāṣôn*, explains God's motivation behind the messiah and the church of the messiah. For *rāṣôn* *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives goodwill, that is, the good desire of God is the motivation to restore the suffering ones. YHWH sent the messiah because such good desire to relieve the suffering is part of the very character of YHWH. Proclaiming this is an important element of the work of the messiah and the church since it challenges those that have never known YHWH or lost their faith in God. That YHWH would be concerned for the suffering today, plants seeds of faith that YHWH will remain concerned tomorrow and in the future. As YHWH demonstrated care for the suffering recorded in the Old Testament, the church today is charged to exhibit God's same care.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 63.

## God's Rescue of the Single Parent in Old Testament

Single-parent families in the Old Testament occurred by death of a spouse or by divorce.<sup>17</sup> Without modern vaccines, healthcare, or antibiotic drugs in the ancient world, mortality was higher at every age for both sexes. Based on estimated Roman era life tables, Marc Mayer Olivé has cited that at age twenty, one in thirteen men died.<sup>18</sup> This rate of mortality increased each year so that at the age of thirty, one in ten men died. Calculations based on these life table estimates of Bruce Frier imply one of every six women were widowed by the age of thirty.<sup>19</sup> YHWH recognized the ensuing suffering of widows and their children and repeatedly called Israel to care for them. YHWH's protection of these who were susceptible to abuse is declared and commanded in the Mosaic law within Exodus 22:22, 23, Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 24:17–21; 26:12, 13; and 27:19. Psalms 68:5 and 146:9 declare YHWH's defense of these vulnerable ones. Proverbs 15:25 contrasts YHWH humbling of the proud while establishing the widow. Among the prophets YHWH calls for the repentance of Israel from their treatment of these powerless one in Isaiah 1:17, Jeremiah 7:6 and 22:3, and Zechariah 7:10. In Malachi 3:5 YHWH gave a vision of judgment day and the quick condemnation of those

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<sup>17</sup> Men, of course, also became widowers in Israel and could find themselves as a single parent. Yet the reality is that men could re-marry easier than women or in some cases had multiple wives or concubines.

<sup>18</sup> Marc Mayer i Olivé, "The Demography of the First Mediterranean Global Network: The Roman Empire," *Contributions to Science* 11 (2015): 52.

<sup>19</sup> B.W. Frier, "Demography," in *The High Empire: AD 70–192*, eds. Bowman A, Garnsey P, and Rathbone D. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 789; The mortality data given in Frier show similar death rates for both men and women, with men dying at a slightly higher rate each year. Thus, through the decade between 20 and 30 nearly as many women died as men creating nearly as many widowers as widows. When both parents died during this decade children would have been orphaned.

that oppressed the widow and orphan. All these passages are instructive as they highlight God's constant character of care. Specific examples of the kind of care YHWH expected of Israel were given in the case of three women.

In Genesis 16:1-16 the account of Hagar, the Egyptian maid of Sarai, is introduced. As an Egyptian Hagar would have worshipped other gods from her childhood so that she begins serving Sarai with no relationship to YHWH. When Sarai believed YHWH had prevented her from bearing children, she gave Hagar to Abram as a surrogate to bear children for Sarai. After Hagar conceived the relationship between the two deteriorated when Hagar ceased to respect Sarai. Under harsh treatment and without hope, Hagar fled alone and pregnant. Single, alone with no protection in the wilderness YHWH sent an angel to direct Hagar back to the safety of Sarai and Abram. YHWH also assured Hagar of her future as well as that of her son. With the angelic message of YHWH's care and hope for her future, Genesis 16:13 records Hagar responding to YHWH in a new relationship beginning with thankfulness, "You are a God who sees." The passage reveals the stresses related to misunderstanding of the character of YHWH, those that have no knowledge of YHWH, the desire to bear children, pregnancy, and lack of advocacy. Rescue for the crisis came by YHWH sending a messenger with truth and care that brought clarity and hope to Hagar and her fetus. YHWH sends intervention by angels and messiah. Jesus continues intervention for the benefit of the suffering through his church. Intervention of the church must bring God's truth and care.

This early crisis was resolved so that Hagar was restored and her son Ishmael born. Hagar did not receive a husband of her own upon return but knew that YHWH was



her defender. Meanwhile, Abram and Sarai were renamed as part of YHWH's re-asserted promise of a future child. Tension with Hagar returned when Sarah gave birth to Isaac. In Genesis 21:9-21 Sarah demanded Abraham remove Hagar and her son to protect a future inheritance for Isaac. Abraham was unable to do so because of the guilt of driving away his own son and Ishmael's mother. YHWH intervened to bring peace to the situation by leading Abraham to listen to Sarah and assuring Abraham Ishmael's care and future. After Hagar and her son were driven away into the wilderness, they become perilously destitute without water. Hagar set her son at a distance while she prayed and wept before YHWH to not allow her to see Ishmael die.<sup>20</sup> YHWH heard their cry and intervened again by sending an angel to remind her of YHWH's attention to her and her son and their future. In this moment of despair Genesis 21:19 records, "Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water..." The two survive and their promised future comes to pass.

In this second crisis of Hagar's aloneness and fear, YHWH again demonstrated a watchful eye upon the plight of her and her son. When Abraham could not bring peace between Sarah and Ishmael and Hagar by his own power or wisdom, YHWH stepped in to lead and accomplish what they could not. When the destitute cried out YHWH heard and responded by sending an angel to dispel their fear. The passage deals with the realities of relationship commitment, care, abandonment, disappointment, frustrations, loss of hope, depression, financial support, inheritance, legacy, separation trauma upon children, future family interaction, guidance, and support. YHWH's action and future promise give guidance to the church when caring for those in the difficult realities of

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<sup>20</sup> While it is not specifically stated in the passage, in her fear and depression Hagar may have hoped YHWH would allow her to die before seeing the death of her son.

blended and separated families. A view of future relationships is given in Genesis 25:9 where Ishmael was present with Isaac to bury Abraham their father. This serves as a sign of some level of relationship between the half brothers.

In the midst of a famine, 1 Kings 17:9-16 records the prophet Elijah was directed by YHWH to seek sustenance by an impoverished widow in the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. When Elijah arrived, he asked the widow for water and bread. The widow revealed her destitution and loss of hope. The famine had left her with a handful of flour and a little oil. She was preparing a final meal for her and her son before they died. Elijah came not only to depend upon the sustenance of this widow but also as a messenger of God's promise to care for her and her son. In that moment with her final bit of food, she and Elijah were required to trust YHWH who did sustain them until rain came upon the land. In this passage we encounter the reality of a single parent who has lost hope. Without a husband to share the burden of finding food and to encourage her and her son, this widow had lost confidence that they would survive. YHWH again intervenes by sending a messenger in Elijah, a man full of trust in YHWH. This passage shows the magnified effects of stress upon the burdened single parent. The background famine intended to bring King Ahab and Israel to repentance demonstrates the complexity of YHWH's care for a nation while also sustaining the weak. The church today, like Elijah, is sent to care for single parents who may lose hope within larger national events.

Another instructive account of the Zarephath widow and her son follows in 1 Kings 17:17-24. Sometime after the famine ceased, the widow's son took ill to the point

of loss of respiration. In her fear and stress the widow accused Elijah of being an agent of God's judgment for her past sin and causing the death of her son. Elijah took the son and asked YHWH to prevent such a calamity and let life return to the child. YHWH revived the child which restored her trust in Elijah as an agent of God's goodness and truth. Despite the care of YHWH to sustain her and her son through the famine, she apparently harbored guilt for some past sin. She was prepared to believe that her son's grave illness was God's judgment and punishment upon her. Elijah calls upon YHWH to restore the life of the child in order that his mother might know that God loved her despite her past. Such depth of worry can fill the mind of a single parent who wonders if their past actions are related to their current suffering or imminent loss. The constant stress upon these parents can cause them to doubt God's gracious, constant love for them. Elijah demonstrated how the church can intervene in prayer and physical care on behalf of these children.

Finally, a third widow of the Old Testament, the wife of a deceased prophet, came to the prophet Elisha in desperation. 2 Kings 4:1-7 recounts the financial demand of creditors upon the widow which would result in the enslavement of her two children. She, unlike the above two widows, would have known YHWH and so she called upon Elisha as a representative of the people of YHWH for help. Elisha responded immediately with earnestness. When he learns that the widow has only a jar of oil among her assets he directs her and her sons to pour this oil into borrowed jars of her neighbors behind closed doors. At God's miraculous provision, Elisha then directed the widow to sell the multiplied oil to pay her debt and sustain her family. The account instructs the servants of

God to emulate Elisha by being quick to attend to the desperate need of the single parent who already knows YHWH in Christ. Such speed of care faithfully represents the priority of YHWH on behalf of the single parent in need. The stress of the financial demands can immobilize a parent leaving them unable to act. Elisha demonstrated the value of encouragement to the entire family to take practical action and to trust God to work in powerful and unexpected ways.

In addition to widowhood, divorce could also cause single parenthood. The seeds of divorce are an unwillingness to be faithful in mutual care. The Scriptures attest that YHWH personally understands the pain of broken trust in marriage and the resulting separation. YHWH identified his commitment to Israel as a husband in Hosea 2:20 and Isaiah 54:5. Yet Israel is described as an unfaithful wife in Hosea 2:2 and Isaiah 1:21. In Jeremiah 3:8 YHWH explains the exile of the northern kingdom of Israel as his writ of divorce for her unfaithfulness. Not only did YHWH and Israel suffer by Israel's lack of faithfulness, but so too did the children of Israel.

God loathes such broken relationship and the sin that precipitates divorce. YHWH spoke through the prophet Malachi in 2:14-15 calling men of both Judah and Israel to faithfulness to their wives with implied reference to Abraham's taking Hagar as a wife and then causing her and Ishmael suffering.<sup>21</sup> Malachi followed in verse 16 with YHWH's declaration, "'For I hate divorce,' says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'and him who covers his garment with wrong,' says the LORD of hosts. 'So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.'" To protect marriages, and by implication

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<sup>21</sup>Malachi 2:15 refers by pronoun to a male seeking godly offspring who betrayed his wife of his youth.

families, YHWH commands his people to exercise care and control of their spirit to maintain trust with their spouse. In some cases it may be possible for single parents to restore trust with the parent of their child. The church can offer Jesus' teaching to divorced or separated parents as a practical way to nurture self-control and rebuild trust.

Israel was also commanded to prevent abandonment of wives without enabling them to potentially remarry. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4 the Mosaic Law specified if a husband encountered some indecency in their wife and decided to send her away, he was required to write and present her a certificate of divorce.<sup>22</sup> The Hebrew noun used for divorce is *keritut*. The finality of the dissolution of the present marriage is understood in the corresponding Hebrew verb, *kārat*, which *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives as to cut off.<sup>23</sup> Yet the benefit of the legal certificate was proof to the community that the woman was free to remarry, critical in a culture where women were dependent upon a male caretaker. Further, these Deuteronomy verses forbade the remarriage to her prior husband if she had subsequently married another. This would have had some moderating effect upon divorce. There was no legal prohibition against separation which might give the marriage partners space to address issues.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The Hebrew *'erwat dābār* in Deuteronomy 21:1 translated in the NASB as *some indecency in her* is vague. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, page 789, gives the literal meaning *nakedness of a thing* though its practical understanding has been the subject of much scholarly debate. In Matthew 19:3 Jesus was questioned on divorce and he spoke to the abuse of this law.

<sup>23</sup> Brown and Driver, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 503; Leviticus 22:13 gives one point of evidence that a widow or divorced woman might return to the home of her father but without her children. In the case of divorce if there were children of the marriage it would be expected they would remain with their father, thus potentially creating further grievous suffering.

<sup>24</sup> In the New Testament the value of a time of separation between marriage partners continues to be held. In 1 Corinthians 7:5-6 the apostle Paul directed those struggling in marriage to separate by agreement for a fixed so that they could reflect in prayer on their issues.

### **New Testament Care for Widows and Their Children**

In Luke 7:11-17 Jesus, accompanied by a crowd, was entering a city called Nain. As he entered a burial procession crowd was exiting the city gates carrying the deceased only son of a widow. Such a widow, having already lost her husband, would have been in shock and trauma. Additionally, she would have faced a destitute future having lost her male care takers. Luke records when Jesus saw the widow he had compassion and acted straightaway. He desired to stop her suffering and grieving. In the midst of a crowd with some likely also wailing in empathy, Jesus asked her to stop weeping. Immediately after his stunning request, Jesus held the coffin from moving and called the young man to rise. The dead young man did so and began to speak, where upon Jesus restored him to his mother. The crowd glorified God in the miraculous sign of mercy through Jesus.

The promptness of Jesus' compassion and care stand out. Uninhibited by the crowd, Jesus sought access to the widow. In a moment of potential criticism of others, Jesus spoke and acted. Jesus, as the model second Adam of 1 Corinthians 15:47 for his church to follow, brought the care of YHWH to this tragic situation with compassion. The early church followed Jesus' example for care of widows.

When the church quickly expanded following Pentecost, Acts 6 recorded the ministry of daily food support for widows and the logistical challenge. This matter was of sufficient important that seven leaders were chosen to ensure the service was completed. County government services today provide food assistance to families in need. Yet single-parent families may lack nutritional knowledge or time to ensure they eat well.

Local congregations can assist with education or assistance to ensure they have nutritious meals. Food and safe shelter are foundational elements of care.

Acts 9:36-41 gives a glimpse of the community of widows within the early church. In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha who was known for her abundance of kind deeds and charity. When she fell sick and died the disciples called upon the apostle Peter in nearby Lydda. He arrived and was taken to an upper room where all the widows stood with Peter weeping while showing him the clothes Tabitha made with them. It is apparent that Tabitha was very important to the widows of Joppa and may have possibly been a widow herself. Peter, sensing the reliance of the widow community upon Tabitha, asked to pray alone. After doing so Peter turned and called to the dead woman to rise. She came to life and Peter restored her to the saints and widows. This passage is instructive of the depth of support widows are able to give one another as a community. The disciple Tabitha was highly honored for her service to this community. The church today can link the suffering community of single parents where they immediately understand by common experience their mutual needs and can support one another.

As in the Old Testament, the early church acknowledged that remarriage was possible for widows. In 1 Corinthians 7 the apostle Paul recognized both marriage and singleness as gifts from God and concluded, "... each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that."<sup>25</sup> Addressing widows specifically in the next verses of 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 Paul encouraged them to marry if they experienced strong

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<sup>25</sup> In Matthew 19:10-12 Jesus taught the same gift basis for singleness or celibate life.

unfulfilled sexual desire. If they did remarry, later in the chapter's verse 39 Paul directed them to only marry another disciple. This passage acknowledges the sexual needs of single parents and the care of the church body to support their marriage to another disciple. Issues of re-marriage are much more complex when children are involved and here the church community can offer prayerful counsel in such a decision.

The variety of kinds of suffering for single-parent families can dissuade the post-modern congregation from engagement. James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, encouraged disciples of the distributed churches to valuable service, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress..." (Jas 1:27). The Greek work translated visit is *episkeptomai*, for which *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* gives to make a careful inspection, look at, examine, inspect as well as to go to see a person with helpful intent.<sup>26</sup> James' intent was to deliver care for widows and children that was thorough in order to understand their need and provide ongoing support. He was aware of their condition, translated here as distress, given by the Greek word *thlipsis*, for which *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* gives trouble that inflicts external or internal distress, oppression, affliction, or tribulation.<sup>27</sup> The word acknowledged a broad range of causes of the suffering they experienced. Thus the early church was directed to engage with whatever the situation disciples might find. This would naturally lead to both immediate care and longer-term issues of justice,

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<sup>26</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 378.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 457.



education, and development. The post-modern church is challenged to engage with the same energy, commitment and endurance.

Serving those in need without the aid of another can be overwhelming. In Luke 10:1-12 Jesus sent seventy disciples out ahead of his arrival to prepare others for his arrival. His directives are detailed and suggest careful attention to ensure their success, protection, growth, and accountability to Jesus. First, he sent them in pairs (Lk 10:1). In the Jewish culture the witness of two confirmed truth. Two disciples bringing news and evidence of Jesus' teaching was more likely to be heard and accepted. A second value of paired ministry was the strength and endurance of two in service together compared to a single disciple. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 speaks to this, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up."

Jesus continued with his instructions to the seventy, "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you" (Lk 10:5-6). Jesus' concern is that his disciples express their intentions clearly at first meeting, that is, the desire to bring peace to the household.

*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* explains the Greek word *eirēnē*, translated in this verse as peace, originates culturally with the Hebrew word *šālôm*.<sup>28</sup> The word's meaning is broader than only the absence of stress and includes the complete health and welfare of a person. Jesus intended his disciples to remain and serve only those that desired restored peace in their life. Such

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 287.

willingness to cooperate with disciples who will serve single-parent families is a first requirement.

In Jesus' ministry context ancient near east hospitality customs provided accommodation for travelers. Jesus continued with instructions, "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages" intending that his disciples would establish relationship and gain respect with the ones they served (Lk 10:7). While our post-modern culture may not hold the same custom of hospitality, the need remains for disciples in ministry to establish trusting and earn respect. This requires the motivation of the ministry to clearly be for the benefit of the single-parent family and for the content of the service to make an impact on their lives.

Once accepted into a household to serve, Jesus continued his directions, "heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Lk 10:9). The order is important: Jesus' disciples were only to announce the good news of the kingdom of God and its Lord after demonstrating its values by their service for the sick. For the Greek word θεραπεύω, translated in this verse as heal, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* gives to heal or restore.<sup>29</sup> The *sick* are delineated by the Greek ἄσθενής, which *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* explains are those who lack strength, are weak or powerless. Thus Jesus' directive may be understood to restore the weak ones. Certainly single-parent families qualify for Jesus' focus of care. Once being

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 453.

strengthened from their weakness or suffering, these families have experienced the teaching of Jesus and can be introduced to the God who loves them.

## PART THREE

### PRACTICE

## CHAPTER 5

### MINISTRY OUTCOMES

The Northkirk congregation desires to be faithful servants in participation with the work of God in its community. The above research has revealed, and Northkirk's MOPS experience has confirmed, that there is a significant number of single-parent families struggling in the community. The Scriptures are clear about God's concern for these suffering families. Though social services have shifted over recent decades to provide care for these families, not all churches have, including Northkirk. As the congregation desires to share in God's salvation work with the next generation, attending to single-parent family needs is an invitation at Northkirk's door.

The previous chapter's theological reflection will guide the design of the Hope single-parent ministry of the congregation. Single-parent families bear an excessive burden considering the original family purpose of creation care and its design to include spousal support. The nurture of children requires assistance to the single parent so that children grow in understanding of their role in creation care. As messiah, Jesus was sent in the power of the Spirit of YHWH to lead the suffering out of their circumstance and

into health and growth of shalom. The church is also sent by Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to continue the four-fold charge of Isaiah 61:1-2: to bring the good news of God's care and rescue to the weak, to relieve the suffering of excessive burdens, to bring God's truth to confront mistruths that stagnate lives, and to announce this all comes from the good desire of God. For single parents and their children, God is the one who sees their distress and hopelessness; who sends messengers in times of crisis to intervene on their behalf; who leads the suffering to rescue despite the complex relationships of life; who gives hope and a future; who calls for the suffering ones to come to know and trust his care; who is able to call the powerful to repentance while lifting the weak; who loves and rescues us despite our past sin; and who is gracious and constant in care. God personally understands broken relationships, the pain of divorce, and seeks to care and bring a future for the abandoned single parent. God is quick in compassion and action for the grieving and restores care through community. God is the creator of intimacy and the one that joins two so they might bless one another. God is a defender of the widow and a father to the fatherless. God's heart is truly represented when his people care for the single parent and their children. Jesus sends his disciples in paired ministry for witness, strength, and endurance at the complex care required for single-parent families.

The goal of the Hope ministry is to assist in restoring single-parent family health by God's guidance so they may experience the gospel of Jesus. As each family receives care, support, friendship, and encouragement, relief will begin and hope for their future will grow. Relationships will be formed between these single-parent families and Hope ministry servants as well as other single parents. A responsive desire to give God thanks

will lead these parents into worship with the Northkirk congregation. Over time Northkirk will become an established partner in the local network of services and ministries God will use to reveal care and the gift of Jesus to this generation of families.

In the Hope ministry goal the word *assist* conveys the reality that Northkirk will serve in part to restore and maintain the health of a family in conjunction with the help of others. These others include their extended family, nearby congregations, para-church organizations, and social and government services. The possibility of relief for these families exists in these distributed resources. But, given the daily demands upon these parents, many lack time to gain awareness of these aides. The servants in this Hope ministry will develop knowledge of these partner resources, personally befriend and understand the specific needs of these families, connect these parents together for mutual support, and help coordinate God's care.

The strategies to support the Hope ministry fall in two general areas: congregational preparation and ministry program preparation. Strategies for congregational preparation will address education, God's concern for single parents and their children, the value of the Holy Spirit's guidance, understanding the impact of our vocabulary in a world that has changed rapidly, and understanding paths and roles of deacon care for these families. These plans will help create shared concern among all church members for single parents.

The strategies to prepare and launch the Hope program will concentrate on constructing a solid foundation, awareness, and framework. This includes clear common understanding of the ministry goal, community communication, establishing a methodical

path of care for these families, establishing mutual trust and respect with families, linking familial support, ensuring safe shelter, helping assure nutritious diet, learning to listen for wisdom and care of family by the Holy Spirit, the primacy of stability for children before parental remarriage, access to support resources, cooperative care among single parents, and congregational relationship support to both parents and children. Each of these is an important component to wholistic, shalom care. Together these will bring an incarnational experience with Jesus.

### **Five Strategies Focuses for Congregational Preparation**

Education for the congregation is the first strategic focus. A valuable method for education is exploration and dialog on a subject. Northkirk hosts a potluck dinner on the first Wednesday of each month. These are corporate gatherings where the congregation can engage with topics by speakers, readings, movie television segments, listen to music, all which can foster discussion and learning. Northkirk can take advantage of these potluck and discussion gatherings to become educate in the months before the launch of the Single-Parent Hope ministry. These monthly discussions can be recorded and shared with those in the congregation unable to attend.

The second strategic focus for congregational preparation is revealing God's care for single-parent families as given in the Scriptures. It is critical for the congregation to understand the three ways God has sought to care for these. First, God has sent messengers to aide widows and their families. Second, Jesus was sent as the messiah to incarnate God's care for the suffering ones. Third, Jesus has sent his disciples to continue



to reveal God's care as evidence of the kingdom of God and its gospel. A six-week study and sermon series will guide the congregation through passages, reflection, and discussion about the relationship between historical accounts and contemporary equivalent of widows and orphans. Each week church members will be provided a passage and set of reflection question which they may discuss in small groups in advance of Sunday worship sermons.

Focus upon prayer is the third strategy to prepare the congregation for the Hope ministry. The congregation will be asked to petition and listen for the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this new Hope ministry. Some Northkirk members currently participate in a ministry of regular prayer named Prayer Partners. Together with Prayer Partners the entire congregation will be encouraged to pray daily for awareness of single-parent families, their needs, and for Hope ministry guidance and preparation.

The fourth strategic focus is communicating in welcoming ways with the community. Building upon the education of diverse family structures and their self-descriptions, the congregation will need to review its vocabulary and images used on its website, social media, monthly newsletter, and print materials to ensure new, non-traditional families are welcome. Communication must convey clear, confident hope in God's love for single-parent families.

Appropriate responsibility and administration of the ministry is the fifth strategic focus for congregational preparation. As part of its Presbyterian polity, the Northkirk members elect and ordain deacons for service of congregational and community care. The deacon's service is defined as one "... of compassion, witness, and service, sharing

in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress.”<sup>1</sup> Service to struggling single-parent families naturally falls under oversight of the congregation’s board of deacons. Deacons meet each month to consider needs of both congregation members and the community and to pray for guidance to respond to these needs financially or otherwise. Deacons also regularly communicate needs to the congregation for their regular support. The congregation financially supports its deacon ministry by weekly giving and is also encouraged to report the needs of others. The approval of the point of oversight for the Hope ministry lies with the Session elders.

### **Twelve Strategic Foci for Ministry Program Preparation**

The first strategic focus for the Hope ministry is to clearly communicate the ministry goal: to assist in restoring single-parent family health by God’s guidance so they may experience the gospel of Jesus. The word health here is meant to convey the Hebrew concept of shalom, for which *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives completeness, safety, soundness, welfare, health, prosperity, peace, friendship, and contentment.<sup>2</sup> Such shalom allows a person to thrive in service to creation care, including their family members. Single-parent families often lack what is necessary to allow them to care well. The Hope ministry seeks to care for these families by assisting them to acquire what they need, to ensure their safety and health, support them by community

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<sup>1</sup> Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Order 2015/2017: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II* (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, 2013), G-2.0201 Deacon Defined.

<sup>2</sup> Brown and Driver, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1022.

care, and to help establish contentment goals. Through prayer and responding to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Hope volunteers and the families they serve will be presented new opportunities. By moving forward in these areas, families will experience new life and hope that Jesus intends for disciples.

Program awareness is the second strategic focus for the ministry. It is anticipated the Hope program in its first year will only be able to personally mentor two or three families. This is a practical goal given the size of the Northkirk congregation and the ministry's significant care commitment. Still, other single parents will be invited to participate to support one another for bi-weekly community gatherings. During these gatherings topics of common concern will be discussed, speakers and resource partner contacts will be invited, relationships between parents will be established, and prayer requests will be shared within the community. Two primary avenues will be used to promote Hope ministry awareness: school networks and social media.

The third strategic focus area for the Hope program preparation is well-defined structure and processes. This will include team member roles, standardized steps to welcome, assess, and guide single parents into and through the program, and a checklist for contacting family relations who will be asked to help support the family. Additionally, identifying, contacting, and categorizing relevant partner resources, services, and governmental programs will be necessary for parents and their families. Understanding the legal boundaries of assistance; establishing processes to ensure privacy for single-parent families; and establishing church general ledger accounts to track the Hope program disbursements for activity and support of families will be required. Finally,

establishing processes for program support contributions as well as an approval process for financial disbursements to families will be needed.

Establishing trust and mutual respect between single-parents families and the Hope ministry is the fourth strategic area. Moving in the direction of health requires a parent and their family to change. Change is risky and requires effort. Without trust, one is unlikely to make the effort to make changes. Trust requires respect. The effort of the Hope ministry team cannot help move a family toward greater health if they do not respect commitments and appointments made on their behalf. By the same measure single parents will expect the Hope ministry volunteers to responsibly keep their commitments and appointments. The Hope program mentor will initially and regularly reinforce the importance of trust and respect as necessary to the goal of restoring health. If a parent participant cannot reliably meet bi-weekly with their mentor, the ministry will be unable to achieve its goal. If not corrected the parent will be notified that the Hope mentor will no longer meet with them. Should a parent wish to resume participation, they will need to apply again for future accommodation.

The fifth strategic focus area of the Hope program is seeking extended family support for single parents. Extended families share a history of care received from prior generations. Whether healthy or dysfunctional their common bond of family-hood yet offers a unique channel to experience the goodness of mutual concern and care. The Hope ministry emphasizes the foundational call to creation care upon single parents and their extended family. Though the present need of a single-parent family may limit their ability to care for extended family, they can still express their concern. Shared concern can

become the based for shared assistance. The Hope mentor will contact extended family as necessary to petition on their behalf while being sensitive to broken relationships. When possible, the Hope mentor will invite the parent and extended family to honor God's call upon them to mutual concern, forgiveness, and care.

Assisting the single parent to find or maintain employment is the sixth strategic focus area of the Hope program. Employment income and potentially growing income over time are important factors to family health. Single parents can be limited in their ability to find a job or find a higher-paying job by the responsibility for children. Employment is another area where extended family, if local, may be able to help the single parent by sharing in child care. The Hope mentor may be able to help such arrangements with extended family or with congregation members. The Hope mentor will also help the parent to objectively assess their career calling and the steps necessary to grow in their calling.

The seventh strategic focus of the Hope program is ensuring safe shelter and nutritious diet for the family. Single-parent families lacking safe shelter are vulnerable to danger in many ways. The Hope administrator will maintain a database of short-term shelter partner facilities in the community and assist families in such need to these. In the daily challenge of life, some single-parent families are not able to maintain a well-balanced, nutritious diet. Healthy diet has a direct impact on performance at school and work for all family members. The Hope administrator will likewise maintain a database of partner and government food assistance programs.

Helping the family sense and follow the Holy Spirit's guidance is the eighth strategic focus for preparation of the Hope program. God's care is a truth to be witnessed by single-parent families. Yet this may be a new perspective which will challenge past values or decision-making methods of the family. God's care and guidance are constantly offered. Learning to wait upon God and recognizing God's direction will be encouraged and sought in shared prayer and listening with the parent's Hope mentor.

The ninth strategic focus to restore family health is understanding the necessity of prioritizing child stability over parental relationships. The children of a single parent experience a deficit of attention compared to the ideal two-parent family. When the single parent's time is divided to seek and develop another partner the children receive even less attention. This focus is not meant to prevent remarriage for the single parent but to ensure that the children do not fall into danger or lose opportunity to grow. The guidance of the Holy Spirit will bring God's care for all family members.

Linking distributed resources to families in need is the tenth strategic focus for preparation of the Hope program. The specific needs of each family will require awareness and access to corresponding resources. There exist a large number of resources, programs, grants, scholarships, subsidies, apprenticeships, and loans to assist the needy. The benefit of the Hope ministry to a single-parent family is its knowledge of these resources and ability to help single parents access them. Maintaining this database of resources and services is central to the Hope ministry. As new resources are launched and some disappear it takes constant communication to be able to help. This commitment

to understand the changing network of care will increase the support of the Hope ministry over time to single-parent families.

The eleventh strategic focus for preparation of the Hope program is building community support for single parents. When meeting people that are sharing your experience a certain respect is automatically extended. Their advice carries more weight because they are walking the same road. Their offer to assist may be welcomed sooner because they know more accurately the need. Their compassion is expressed through empathy rather than sympathy. Because they understand the difficulty, they can be counted on when help is needed. Community brings strength to its members internally as well as strength when the group calls those outside for justice and mercy. Single parents can help each other greatly if there is a common gathering. Community is a place where single parents can extend creation care to other single parents.

Finally, building congregational support for single-parent families is the twelfth strategic area of the Hope program. A congregation grows when individual vulnerabilities are met with compassion. The needy, suffering ones then experience God's care and begin to experience relief. They are welcomed, respected, and able to establish friendships. The child with questions about life can spend time with others who not only talk about God but are living examples of God's goodness. A parent who needs wise counsel can find it as they pray with another about an issue. From such care come new disciples that desire to give to others what God has provided for them.

The implementation of the Single-Parent Hope ministry will require methodical steps over time. Because not every church member is able to attend every worship

service, fellowship event, discussion, or Bible study, each implementation step must enable multiple points for engagement. This is important in order to allow the congregation move together in understanding, prayer, and action. The period of preparation before ministry launch is approximately one year. A timeline of preparation components and ministry launch milestones are given in Appendix A.



## CHAPTER 6

### IMPLEMENTATION

The strategic focus areas to achieve the desired Hope ministry outcomes are here practically expanded. As in chapter 5 these are segmented by congregational preparation and ministry program preparation. The implementation details also follow within the general timeline given at the conclusion of chapter 5.

#### **Congregational Preparation Implementation**

The five strategic focus areas of congregational preparation include education, revealing God's care for single-parent families, praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, communicating in welcoming ways, and chartering the deacon-led Hope ministry team. Congregation preparation necessarily precedes the Hope ministry launch so that the body is of one mind in the ministry. Especially in a small congregation context, it is important

that all members are aware of the many single-parent family needs, the Hope ministry goal, and support roles where they may serve or support.

### **Educate: Monthly Dinner and Discussion**

On the first Wednesday of each month congregation members will be invited to share a meal and engage in discussion. The purpose of these is to address issues that allow God to pave the way in support of the Hope ministry. The open forum of these discussions enables members to consider new perspectives, ask questions, hear from one another, express concerns, and give input. These can be led by pastors, Session elders, deacons, or invited speakers. A summary of these meetings will be communicated to the congregation through its monthly newsletter. These gatherings are expected to last one hour and can be recorded for members unable to attend.

The first area of education the congregation will benefit from is models of church growth. It will be helpful to discuss the past attractional model of growth and compare this to the missional model of joining the present work of God in the community. Some in the congregation will remember moving into the city and looking for a church home. They may have been attracted to the congregation by some aspect of worship or its campus. The reality today, though, for a younger post-modern generation who may not have been raised as part of a congregation, is different. Looking for a church may not be a priority at all. Yet discussing how God is already at work caring for young families will begin to help the congregation understand how it can be relevant in the community.

The second area of beneficial education is contemporary family structures. The diversity of households among young families, and the culture in general, may be underappreciated by an older congregation. It is common to think of young families within the framework of one's own past and values. It will be helpful for Northkirk to take time together to digest the census research above, to hear first-hand from single parents about their challenges and sense of God's care, and to understand the world through single parent eyes by watching contemporary movies or segments. As a result, the congregation may begin to discuss possible changes to ministry days and times to accommodate single-parent families.

A third area of beneficial education will be congregational vocabulary and presumptions behind certain words. Some church members may feel disappointment that traditional family terms have been replaced in the culture. This might lead some to resist using new words in place of traditional ones. The congregation must recognize that the goal of caring for these families requires compassionate communication upon which trust is built. Worship services in particular include words, phrases, and images that communicate who God loves. Despite a self-description of reformed and always reforming, PCUSA congregations often make use of historical creeds and Bible versions which include words and concepts of past generations and centuries. Discussing how these may make a non-traditional family feel will help worshippers understand when some words may need to be changed. Legacy hymns also may also need to be worded with care to ensure all worshippers feel welcome.

These monthly dinner and discussion events are planned for five months. Each will open with an introduction to the topic by a speaker and then engage members with exploratory questions. Discussion will be drawn to local implications for single-parent neighbors and community circumstances. The details of each monthly gathering are given in Appendix B.

### **Reveal God's Care for Single-Parent Families: Study and Sermon Series**

A six-week study and sermon series will focus the congregation on God's care for the single parent in the Scriptures and applying this to the current cultural context. The congregation will be asked to study and discuss the following passages in small groups in advance of worship service sermons. The six passages, their calendar study dates, the concluding sermons, and worship service themes are given in table 1.

Table 1. Six-week study and sermon series

Week	Passage	Sermon	Theme
Jan. 7-13, 2019	Genesis 21:9-21	A Widow's Fear	Suffering children
Jan. 14-20, 2019	1 Kings 17:9-16	A Widow's Despair	Hopelessness
Jan. 21-27, 2019	1 Kings 17:17-24	A Widow's Guilt	God Misunderstood
Jan. 28-Feb. 3, 2019	Luke 7:11-17	A Widow's Loss	Jesus' Compassion
Feb. 4-10, 2019	Malachi 2:15b-16, Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Psalms 68:5	God's Care for the Divorced	Care for the Abandoned
Feb. 11-17, 2019	James 1:27, Proverbs 15:25, Acts 6:1-3	God's Protection for the Widow and Orphan	Protecting for the Suffering

### **Pray for the Holy Spirit's Guidance**

To stimulate congregational awareness of single-parent family neighbors and prayer on their behalf, a neighborhood prayer board will be displayed in the sanctuary at the outset of the six-week study and sermon series. On this board cards can be pinned with family names and their needs. A second prayer responses board will also be hung so that members may post insights and activity received in response to congregational prayer.

Each week Northkirk worshippers are welcome to submit specific prayer requests which are lifted during the Sunday service. During this time of Hope ministry preparation, as well as post-launch, the prayer request form will be updated with a specific space for single-parent family needs. As the Hope ministry will be linked to partner resources for single-parent families, the congregation will also pray weekly for one of these congregations, para-church organization, or social and government services. This will help the congregation understand God's broad activity and care and inspire thankfulness and hope.

### **Welcome: Communication**

After the education series of monthly gatherings conclude in June, Session elders will be asked to gather together teams to review communication materials in their areas of responsibility. The teams' focus will be to ensure welcoming words, images, lyrics, and schedules for single-parent families. The congregation is fortunate to have school teachers who can share how schools communicate to ensure no family member feels

ignored. A timeline goal to revise content for website and print materials is September when the Hope ministry will be launched.

Those involved in creating regular published content for weekly worship or other ministry gatherings, as well as social media, will benefit from a single-parent family friendly review checklist. These persons include the pastor, youth director, children's ministry leader, director of music, MOPS leadership team, and church secretary. This document will include recommended vocabulary and reminders to consider linking families and friends to make participation practical. The congregational monthly newsletter needs to document the participation of single-parent families in every aspect of congregational life. This will be received by visitor and members as welcoming.

### **Administrate: Deacon-led Hope Ministry**

With administrative responsibility assigned to the deacon board of the congregation, the moderator of the deacon board and a sub-committee will need to understand the details to the Hope ministry. These details include its ministry goals, strategy, team roles, timeline plan, partner and community resources, budget and accounting plan, legal and privacy boundaries, as well as ministry processes contained in chapter 6. Naturally, these components may be refined within deacon leadership discussion. This detailed introduction to deacon leaders will begin after completion of the six-week study and sermon series. Later, during the summer, these refined ministry components will be introduced to the first class of Hope ministry volunteers in support of a fall ministry launch.

A key component of the ministry will be the Hope guide and supporting curriculum materials. The Hope guide will explain the ministry and discuss the metaphor of an umbrella of health, from which the parent and a Hope mentor can begin to work through the needs of the family. The guide will give Scripture references explaining God's love and care for parents and children as well as a prayer journal for reflections. The guide will discuss family leadership as a foundation of creation care, goals for family life, the importance of extended family care, food and housing resources, child support services, the value of community support, community and government resources, healthcare, education opportunity, and legal resources.

The core roles of the Hope ministry team will be welcomer, administrator, encourager, and mentor. A minimum of one person per role will be necessary. The distinct roles are empowered by the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts and allow the ministry team members to contribute without overloading any one person. The welcomer employs their spiritual gifts of hospitality and compassion to invite and greet new single-parent families. This role helps build program awareness through regular contact with local schools and utilizing social media. The welcomer role also connects single parents in the community with one another when opportunities arise to help one another. At the bi-weekly community gatherings the welcomer will open the gathering, introduce speakers, and facilitate discussions.

The administrator will utilize their spiritual giftedness to organize data, finances, materials, and communications for the program. Since the Hope ministry works alongside partner congregations and organizations, the administrator will maintain communication

with these so those serving in the encourager role and mentor role have up-to-date information on available resources. The administrator will be the interface to the deacon board for requisitions and operating within budget. The administrator will also maintain the calendar for community gathering topics and speakers as well as gather materials to be distributed during these meetings. The administrator will also keep the ministry team and community of single-parent families connected by maintaining communication tools for texting, email, and social network posting. Finally, the administrator will ensure that program participants have necessary curriculum materials for mentor meetings and for community gatherings.

The encourager serves families by spiritual gifts of mercy, encouragement, and help in order to assist these families as occasion may arise with transportation, support, inspiration, and prayer partnership. The mentor will introduce the single parent to the encourager when appropriate and suggest areas to the parent where the encourager may be able to help the family. This encourager role will assist on a scheduled basis but may also be available for unexpected need as they are available. The encourager may come to know all family members and may be a valuable link to other congregation members who may share common interests or needs.

The mentor serves with their gifts of discernment, teaching, faith, and shepherding to meet privately with single parents weekly to listen and understand their needs. After becoming aware of the Hope ministry, a single parent may schedule a time with a mentor to understand the ministry and if they could benefit from its care. If so, the mentor will develop a short-term plan of prayer for urgent needs and then will begin to



meet bi-weekly with the single parent to sense the guidance of the Holy Spirit going forward.

At the conclusion of the first year of ministry, the deacon board will ask for Hope volunteer feedback and incorporate this via proposed refinements to the Hope ministry structure and processes. The moderator of the deacon board will meet with the pastor and Session elder responsible for local mission to present the report of Hope ministry team. This report and its suggested refinements will be brought to the Session for review and approval for the following year.

### **Ministry Program Preparation Implementation**

The twelve strategic focus areas of ministry program preparation fall into two areas: administration and training. Administration tasks include communicating the Hope ministry goal, program awareness, well-defined structure and processes, nurturing the single-parent community, and nurturing congregational support for single parents. Training tasks include establishing mutual trust and respect, seeking extended familial support for the single parent, assisting with employment, ensuring safe shelter and nutrition, praying with the parent for the Holy Spirit's guidance, prioritizing stability for children over parent relationships, and coordinating access to resources. These areas are considered in the Northkirk context and expanded in practical detail below. The implementation recommendations that follow consider the limited resources of the Northkirk congregation and budget. The first year implementation results will be instructive to refine for future ministry.

### **Communicate the Hope Ministry Goal**

The deacon leaders and servants of the Hope ministry are the first group that need to clearly understand the ministry goal. Understanding the goal is critical to celebrating achievement. Restoring health to the family, even incrementally, is achieving the goal. Particular issues may require years over which a family continues to be restored in health. Yet along the way success can be celebrated. A major element of health is new relationships with the body of Christ that support and strengthen the family.

The Hope ministry assists families by God's guidance. Prayer and God's guiding response, therefore, will lead activity on behalf of families. Because each family situation will be different, each path and timeline of assistance will also vary. Though every family would like to have all their needs met instantly, the reality is that shalom health takes time to learn, trust in God to be extended, and growth for all family members to occur.

Once the Hope ministry leaders and servants understand its goal, they will be able to communicate it to the community and potential participants. Hope program descriptions will be published on Northkirk and other partner websites, printed church publications, as well as social media pages. These descriptions should clearly state the goal of the ministry as well as expound the key ideas of assistance, health, and God's guidance. Testimonials of participants will help to underscore the ministry outcome goal.

### **Promote Awareness**

Two channels of community access will be pursued to build Hope ministry awareness: local schools and social media. Each month a calendar of following month's

community night topics will be sent to the Alta Loma Elementary, Central Elementary, Etiwanda, Upland Unified, and Chaffey Joint Union High school district administration offices. Ideally, the Hope program will be included in regular district materials made available to every parent. In order to help build awareness through the local school personnel, the Hope ministry will invite relevant district administrators, teachers, and staff on a regular basis to introduce topics at the bi-weekly community night gatherings. This will also have a beneficial impact on the Hope ministry volunteers. Schools are on the front lines of care for single-parent families and learning from their experiences will help the Hope ministry better serve families.

Each school also maintains a Parent-Teacher Association that works closely with schools to ensure child success. A calendar of the following month's topics will also be sent to the district school PTA community contacts. The Northkirk deacon board may also consider funding an annual single-parent support gift to local school districts to be employed as the district decides.

Social networking is a common resource among the current generation of school parents. School websites include invitations for parents to connect via Facebook and Twitter for regular communication. Parents also link by other community associations including Rancho Cucamonga Parks and Recreation, neighborhood associations, music programs, and children's sports leagues. Photographs of community gatherings and speakers can be shared on the Instagram social network. By maintaining a presence on these social networks, Hope can let others know about its community gatherings while hash-tagging the name of local communities, the topic of relevance, and the already

established tags #singleparent and #singleparentlife. The existing Northkirk MOPS ministry is also a channel to invite young single parents who need care.

### **Structure and Processes**

The Hope ministry is anticipated to begin in the second week of September 2019. The ministry will operate in full ministry mode between September and April and also host single-parent community nights additionally between the months of May and July. The community gatherings will be scheduled for the third Wednesday of each month. This Hope ministry will begin following a summer of program awareness effort. The school year in Rancho Cucamonga begins on the second week of August. The four weeks between the start of school and the Hope program will allow families to settle into school schedule patterns.

Parents may enter the program through community gathering nights or by requesting a meeting with a Hope mentor. The community gathering will begin at 7:00 pm and last for an hour. The Hope administrator will ensure nursery and childcare workers are in place by 6:45 pm and have the proper child identification tools to register children. Nursery and childcare to age ten will be provided for the hour in the children's wing. Two congregational volunteer monitors will be in place by 6:45 pm to host two rooms for children ages eleven through seventeen. These rooms will also have identification tools. Middle school and high school students will have separate monitored rooms for a study hour.

The Hope greeter will host the community gathering meetings in the fellowship hall, welcome parents, introduce the attending Hope administrator and speaker and topic. Any speaker or topic review will be encouraged to follow a thirty minute format allowing fifteen minutes for discussion and interaction. The Hope greeter will close the time reminding parents that they may submit prayer requests or request a meeting with a Hope mentor. The administrator will gather these for congregational prayer partners and Hope mentor follow up.

An initial one-hour meeting between the Hope mentor and the single parent will begin with prayer asking for God's guidance. It is important that the Hope mentor explain they are not necessarily an expert in any of the areas they will discuss with the parent. The mentor is not expected to know everything nor have an answer for every situation. They are a mentor in the sense of one who has learned to receive God's care and walk in trust of God's guidance. The mentor will be a helpful advocate who will communicate the single-parent family needs to others as the parent requests.

The mentor will next clearly communicate the ministry goal, process, and activities. Then the parent will be asked to explain their situation. Employing their gift of discernment, the mentor will listen and begin to document the family health status and challenges. Specifically, they will be listening to identify things necessary to restore health to the parent as well as the children. There may be urgent items identified in the first meeting that will take priority for follow up.

Relationships are an important foundation for health. In the first and following meetings the mentor will seek to understand what supportive relationships exist for the

family. Valuable, good relationships are reason for thanksgiving. Dysfunctional or broken relationships can be addressed in prayer and follow up activity. Sometimes parents are hesitant to ask extended family for help given soured or broken relationships. The Hope ministry mentor can contact family to help restore these explaining the family situation from an objective position. Separate relationship inventories will be taken for both parent and children.

Financial need is an important area to discuss. Urgent need will be apparent but a wholistic assessment of financial need will be helpful for follow up assignment to the parent and discussion with their mentor. The children's other parent and extended family need to be prioritized as possible sources of help for the single parent. As with extended family relationship issues, the mentor can serve an objective party to help restore caring interaction between family members when one is in need. The mentor will also be able to bring the family need to the Northkirk deacon board as well as to understand what partner resources may be available.

The parent can give an initial description of physical and mental health of the family. Once again, the intent at the initial meeting is to understand urgent concerns. Greater in-depth discussion will happen in follow up meetings. A practical indicator of physical and mental health is energy level. Stress, exhaustion, and lack of sleep can create a condition of chronic fatigue. Helping parents to understand the importance of Sabbath rest and beginning to plan for such rest will contribute to increasing health. Identifying daily assistance needs that can help relieve stress are areas where the Hope encourager can serve.

The mentor will also want to assess the hope of the parent. Hopelessness is a sign of deep suffering and requires urgent care. Hope can represent both short-term and long-term goals for the parent or family. These can provide a basis for prayer and direction for options in making choices as they present themselves. Hope should be encouraged since God assures us our needs are known as is God's care. Hope also points to desired growth.

Healthy families grow physically, spiritually, and in responsibility to serve in creation care. A suffering family may not be able to grow. But once safety and stable shelter and nutrition are established, the family can look forward to growth. Hope may be expressed in growing in parenting skills. A parent may hope to take their children on a vacation to visit extended family who have supported them. Hope may be expressed by the desire for education which can lead to new responsibilities in employment. The mentor will help the parent watch for growth goals and celebrate the family's ability to achieve these.

The Hope ministry will welcome single-parent families as they are in their understanding of, and relationship with, God. The ministry volunteers will be transparent in their service to Jesus Christ yet not require a level of faith to be demonstrated in order to receive care. Every single parent is to be respected as a loved child of God.

The mentor will also introduce the Hope guide, its weekly prayer and reflection guide emphasizing God's care for single-parent families, its focus upon a stable environment for their children, and the parental benefit of meeting with other single parents and receiving congregational care. An outline of the Hope guide is given in Appendix D. Meeting with the parent bi-weekly the mentor to reflect upon God's

guidance through the Scriptures, the mentor will need to challenge areas of change that are necessary for the health of the family. Mentors need to be clear about the challenges ahead yet also encourage the parent to participate in care based in the goodness of safe relationships.

At the conclusion of the first meeting the parent will be asked if they are willing to agree to the assistance and cooperation within the tenets of the Hope ministry. While these do not require a specification of faith or discipleship, they are asked to agree with the principles of care. Specifically these include: (1) God cares for them individually as well as their children; (2) the parent's highest priority will be to care for their children; (3) the congregation and community can support the parent so that the family is restored to health; and (4) meeting every two weeks with a mentor for prayer, reflection, and discussion creates a valuable cycle for increasing health. The parent is encouraged to participate in the life of the congregation, worship, children and youth programs, and single-parent community gatherings, but these are left to their choice. There will be no request for a signed agreement to participate but two documents will be given to the parent for review and signature. The first document is a statement of respect for privacy of information. This document will state that the parent is not required to disclose any information they prefer kept private and that any information necessary for assistance of Northkirk deacons or other partner resources will require their signed approval. The second document will be a release of liability for any assistance given to the parent or family off campus of the church grounds.



If the parent is willing to participate with the Hope ministry, a follow up meeting will be scheduled by their mentor. If there have been urgent needs noted in the initial meeting, a division of responsibility will be agreed upon by the mentor and parent for actions to be undertaken. Taking time over subsequent meetings to segment family needs into smaller distinct components will help families become healthier step-by-step. Setting reasonable milestones and tracking progress will encourage families to trust God. Finally, the mentor will forward a summary of parent and family to the Hope ministry team to keep its members current to their related roles of care.

If the parent desires, the Hope mentor will meet with them and the Hope encourager to introduce them. The parent and the encourager will determine what help is possible given circumstances in order to discuss practical assistance to the family. Once per month the encourager will provide the mentor a summary of their assistance along with suggestions for discussion with the parent or children.

The Hope administrator will gather the ministry team twice a month. In the first meeting, which will occur during the first week of each month, the administrator will gather monthly summaries of the role team members, including family reports from the mentor to be submitted to the deacon board. The reports will be kept strictly confidential with the deacon ministry. Benevolence requests and recommendations will be included in these monthly summaries.

The deacon board meets during the second week of each month. At their meeting they will review the Hope administrator package and prayerfully respond to the administrator with their feedback, suggestions, requests for additional information, and

approval of any benevolence requests and recommendations. The administrator will present the results of the deacon board review at the second Hope ministry team meeting on the third week of each month. During these two team ministry meetings, necessary planning and logistics will be discussed to support the ministry.

A Hope partner services directory will be maintained by the administrator. The directory will include resources in a seven mile radius surrounding Northkirk indicated in figure 1. Beyond Rancho Cucamonga, the radius incorporates the cities of Upland, Fontana, Ontario, and Montclair, and Claremont. The directory will also list county, state, and federal resource programs. The directory will be structured by type of resources including emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing, and food and supportive services. A preliminary draft of this directory is given in Appendix E.

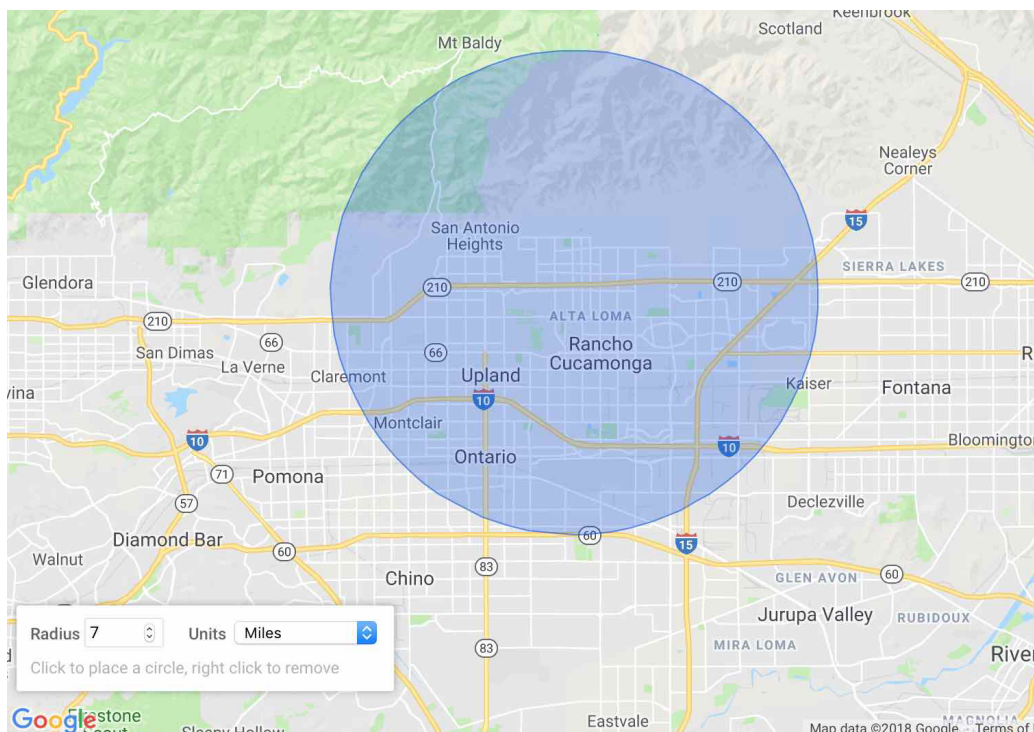


Figure 1. The Hope Partner Services Directory seven mile radius area.

The Hope administrator will contact each partner congregation or service once per year to update the directory with any change in services they offer, partner contact person, and website information. As Northkirk has a regular ministry of contributing food for the needy in the community, so too do other churches and para-church groups. These nearby congregations and organizations also offer clothing, temporary housing, counseling, basic nursing, transportation, support for pregnancy care, exercise classes, parenting classes, support groups for the divorced, the grieving, and substance abuse.

In addition to partner congregation support ministries there are numerous federal, state, and county assistance program resources for which single-parent families may qualify. The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and multiple child nutrition programs including school breakfast and lunches as well as summer food programs. The Department of Housing and Urban Development offer affordable housing location, rental assistance, and Housing Choice Voucher Program.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers healthcare and dental care through Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and financial assistance through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) which is available through the California CalWORKS program. The California Department of Social Services also provides food assistance through its CalFresh program, childcare assistance through CalWORKS Child Care program, kinship guardian assistance through its Kin-GAP program, and energy assistance through its LIHEAP program. At the county

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<sup>1</sup> The Housing Choice Voucher Program supports rental housing assistance to private landlords. This support comes under Section 8 of the Housing Act of 1937.

level San Bernardino provides a number of adjacent services as part of its preschool services department including prenatal and postpartum care, nutrition education, mental health and support groups, education and job training, and literacy programs.

The Hope ministry must take care to prevent certain legal liabilities. It is important to clarify to parents who will be assisted that the Hope ministry does not provide assessment, diagnosis, treatment or counseling that is the basis of mental health services. Rather, the Hope ministry is principally providing biblical teaching and spiritual counseling. The Hope administrator will ask each parent meeting with a Hope mentor to sign an acknowledgement of this.

Maintaining the privacy of information of parents meeting with a Hope mentor or Hope encourager is critical to building and maintaining trust. It is to be understood that both the mentor and encourager will hold personal meeting information private. Any agreed upon plans for the single parent of their family will be responsibility of the single parent to communicate to other Hope ministry volunteers as they may require assistance. The Hope administrator will also ask each parent meeting with either a Hope mentor or encourager to sign an acknowledgment that information the parent shares is voluntary and any private information shared identified as confidential. The Hope volunteers will respect these requests to ensure privacy.

The Northkirk treasurer maintains general ledger accounts for its deacons ministry. Since part of the Hope ministry will function under the deacon benevolence funds, the existing congregational giving processes can also support Hope families as funds allow. It will be helpful for reporting purposes to establish sub-accounts to track

disbursements to Hope families. This deacon disbursement activity is already treated with confidentiality.

The administrative aspects and community support gatherings of the Hope ministry, though, will require budgeting. These costs will include program awareness materials, Hope guide curriculum duplication, monthly community gathering materials duplication, childcare workers for community gatherings, and an honorarium budget for speakers. The materials printing and duplication can make use of the church office copier resource. These anticipated costs can be accommodated in the annual budget under local mission. An estimated annual budget for these items is given in table 2.

Table 2. Hope Ministry initial annual budget

Item	Annual Budget
Program awareness materials	\$250
Hope Guide curriculum	\$150
Community gathering materials	\$400
Childcare community gatherings	\$400
Speaker honorariums	\$600
Total	\$1,800

The monthly single-parent community gatherings have the potential to help a greater number of parents and families than what is possible through the limited Hope mentor role in the first year. While the Hope greeter role can introduce the meetings, it will be valuable to the ministry to identify single parents that are interested in helping with leadership of these meetings. The voice of a peer single parent will be respected and help make new visitors feel welcome. Over time some of these single-parent leaders may also become interested in Hope ministry roles.

Valuable topics are important to attract new attendees. Relevant topics will be found within single-parent life experiences. Each month's program awareness activity should highlight the value of a new solution to common single-parent dilemmas. Expertise in specific areas is also valuable. The Hope ministry team may draw upon its partner directory guide and invite representatives to address topics. An initial schedule of community gathering topics for the first year months is given in Appendix C.

The final strategic area to be expanded is stimulating congregational relationships of care for single-parent families. Support for families is strengthened by multiple relationships of care. The gospel is communicated more effectively by a number of caring acts. Regular opportunities for congregation members to engage and serve these new families are necessary to foster deeper relationships. A useful structure is designing activity by relationship type.

Recognizing the relative age of a church member to single-parent family members suggests possible care activities or shared experiences. Some in the congregation fall naturally into the age of a grandparent to either the parent or children. Others may fit into the generation of a parent, uncle or aunt to the single parent. Peers in the congregation are natural friends or may be viewed as brothers or sisters. These relative seasons of life bring wisdom or energy that is valuable to the single parent and their children. The Session elders may designate weekend events to engage with others in the church to serve one another in different ways. For example, one weekend church members might be encouraged to take another out for career talk over coffee. Another activity could be an encouragement to empty nesters to introduce youth to new local hiking trails. A third

possibility is a coordinated weekend mini-vacation with peers for single parents while their children are on a youth retreat or camp event. Such cross-generational and peer-generational activities allow members to intentionally consider to whom they might extend care as well as initiate an invitation in the context of a congregation-wide effort.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

American culture has dramatically changed over the past six decades impacting every aspect of life including its worldview, family structures, and the effectiveness of the church to make new disciples. While in some areas the church has led aspects of this cultural change, such as social justice and equality issues, in other areas the church has been left behind and no longer is assumed to be a foundation of family life. While prior generations of the American church were able to pass the gospel to young families, the current milieu presents a serious challenge. Today's young families can be unreceptive to the gospel because they perceive the church to be unwelcoming or irrelevant to their needs. Underlying this separation has often been a church ministry presumption that families and their needs have not changed.

In 1960 95 percent of children were born to married mothers. By 2008 more than 40 percent of children were born to unmarried mothers. With increasing work roles open to women over this time, some have seen their wages also grow so that they are no longer necessarily dependent upon higher wage-earning men. Recent medical technology and social acceptance has allowed women to bear children without a personal relationship with a man. Young adults today marry later than prior generations. Pew Research found that 41 percent of adults between the age of thirty and forty-nine believe marriage is becoming obsolete. Where prior generations believed marriage was both moral and financially necessary in order to raise a family, this is no longer held by all in the American culture. Yet churches that consider sexual intercourse before marriage sin, and



families with children born to these parents not normal, continue to desire traditional marriages and the resulting families to join their churches.

Churches have difficulty seeing the two-parent family presumptions built into their ministries. Common activities such as Bible studies, praise band or choir, youth group, fund raisers, and retreats may assume capabilities that single-parent families do not have. Bible studies may presume days or evenings others have free. Music ministries may think there is no cost to participate presuming another parent is able to care for children. Youth group may discuss parental roles for which some students lack models. Fundraising may presume two-parent incomes that can contribute to church activities. Fellowship events may presume married partners or two-parent participation. Retreat teaching or focus may presume marriage or divided parental responsibilities. Any one of these can cause a visitor to feel they do not fit, are not welcome, or that their particular needs are not addressed.

Single-parent families have different needs than their two-parent counterpart. Single parents are constantly exhausted by their solo responsibility to work and family. They rarely can take time to pursue their interests without the help of another. Because their family income is singular, they are critically dependent upon their employment and quickly feel the result if there is even temporary loss of income. They have less time to repair things that commonly break or need attention. Growth may not be on their horizon because survival consumes their attention. Their children are regularly aware that they do not have the benefit of a second parent. They often will not have the same educational

opportunities or inspiration as two-parent households. These single-parent family needs are opportunities for the church to incarnate God's care in relevant ways.

God designed the nucleus of family with father and mother to give necessary mutual support so they might succeed in their call to creation care. This care includes shared nurture of children who inherit the same call. Success of the family is dependent upon its health. When a parent is suddenly alone with the responsibility for children, they are immediately overwhelmed. The Scriptures reveal God and Jesus the messiah responding with compassion and action for widows and children to restore their hope in God who loves them. In our context God has already begun to care for single-parent families through government social programs as well as congregational and para-church ministries.

The church has a long history of caring for widows, beginning with those in Jerusalem recorded in Acts 6, so that they tangibly experienced God's care and could be received into communities of support. Today many such social services have been assumed by various government organizations all separated by the constitution from the church. Though elements of relief are available, these can still be difficult to access. Though these can sustain, they are delivered without the assurance of God's care to inspire trust and hope. Without a surrounding community to impart our common call to creation care, single-parent families might not know the joy of fulfilling this call.

Jesus leads the church by the Holy Spirit to join and complete the works of the Father so that the Father might be glorified. The suffering of single-parent families has been made apparent to the Northkirk congregation by the Holy Spirit. The invitation has

been extended to assume the role of wholistic caretaker of these families, one at a time. Though the Northkirk congregation is small, we have been gifted by the Holy Spirit with disciples that can lead and serve in this Hope ministry. Northkirk can help single-parent families individually and to help establish a community for them.

Wholistic care brings important final pieces to the work God has already accomplished through government resources and other partner ministries and services. Knowledge of where assistive resources and services can be found is the first part of the Hope ministry wholistic care. Rather than having to tell a family the congregation does not know how to help with their need, Northkirk will develop this systemic knowledge that is valuable and critical. The second component of the Hope ministry is a team of disciples that can share this knowledge with the overwhelmed single parent in a caring way so they know the congregation is committed to help them be restored to health. Helping the parent access these distributed resources is the third element of the Hope ministry. This may involve online applications, research, or arranging transportation.

The fourth part of the wholistic Hope ministry advocating for the family need. This includes inviting extended family to support the single parent and children and brings the opportunity to restore or bond extended families together in mutual care. Nurturing a parent and their children's relationship with God is the fifth element of wholistic care. The first step to deep trust in God begins with introducing one God's care through Jesus the messiah. Jesus is the initiator of the care the family receives. The sixth and final component of wholistic care is building a community of mutual support.

Developing relationships of practical care strengthen and inspire all families involved, enabling them to grow together into the areas God will call them.

God brought the awareness of the suffering single-parent family to the Northkirk congregation through its MOPS ministry as it sought to pass the gospel to the next generation. The congregation has demonstrated it possesses the giftedness and servant heart to care for these families. Those single parents that have continued to become part of the Northkirk congregation have been an affirmation of God's call to establish a focused ministry so that others may experience Jesus' care and be restored to health and calling in God's kingdom.

## APPENDIX A

### HOPE MINISTRY TIMELINE

The ministry preparation components and launch milestones are proposed according to the following timeline.

<u>Activity/Action</u>	<u>Period/Date</u>
Hope Ministry Session Consideration and Approval	Sept-October 2018
Hope Ministry Budget Approval	November 2018
Hope Study and Sermon Series	January-February 2019
Monthly Dinner/Discussions	February-June 2019
Initial Deacon Leadership Meetings	April 2019
Inviting Hope Ministry Team	May 2019
Hope Team Training	June-August 2019
Meet with External Partners	June-August 2019
Hire Childcare for Wed Evenings	July-August 2019
Train Tutors for Wed Evenings	July-August 2019
Hope Community Awareness	August 2019 and forward
Launch Hope Ministry	September 2019
Weekly one-with-one meetings	1st/3rd weeks
Women's community/subjects	2nd/4th Wednesday evenings 7:00-8:00
Men's community/subjects	2nd/4th Wednesday evenings 7:00-8:00
Monthly Report to Deacon Board	October 2019 and monthly forward

<u>Activity/Action</u>	<u>Period/Date</u>
Fostering Adult/Youth Service Events	Once per quarter
Revise Budget for Hope Year Two	November 2019
End of School Year Celebration	May 2020
Invite New Hope Team Members	May 2020
Hope Ministry Feedback Meeting	June 2020
Revisions to Process, Resources	July 2020

## APPENDIX B

### MONTHLY DINNER AND DISCUSSION EVENTS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Discussion Topic and Questions</u>
February 6, 2019	<p>Church Growth Models: Attraction and Missional</p> <p>How did churches grow in the last century?</p> <p>How is the culture different today?</p> <p>How are families suffering today? What help do they need?</p> <p>Where is God already caring for families in our community?</p> <p>To whom is the Holy Spirit leading us to care?</p> <p>How can we join what God is already doing through others?</p>
March 6, 2019	<p>Contemporary Family Structures</p> <p>How are families different today than fifty years ago?</p> <p>What does US Census data tell us about families?</p> <p>Interview: How do single-parent families struggle?</p> <p>How does the single parent think about God's care for them?</p>
April 10, 2019	<p>Movies: Single-Parent Family Challenges</p> <p>Movie segments: "Parenthood", "Spanglish", "I Am Sam", "About A Boy", "Where the Heart Is"</p> <p>What family needs did you notice that surprised you?</p>

<u>Date</u>	<u>Discussion Topic and Questions</u>
May 1, 2019	<p>Music and Books: Single-Parent Family Challenges</p> <p>Music segments: “The Home That Mom Built”,  “Single Dad’s Song (Daddy's Here)”</p> <p>Who was brought to your mind in the songs?</p> <p>What longing did you hear? How can God meet this need?</p> <p>Book segments: “Dear Mr. Henshaw”, “The Invisible String”,  “Was it the Chocolate Pudding?”</p> <p>How did the children deal with their frustration?</p> <p>How can a community of care help such situations?</p>
June 5, 1019	<p>Family Vocabulary: Words and Conversation</p> <p>Adult relationships: Husbands, Wives, Partners, Significant Other</p> <p>Home life: Moms, Dads, Parents, Guardians, Families</p> <p>Holidays: Father’s/Mother’s Days</p> <p>When have assumptive words made you feel awkward?</p> <p>How can conversation be caring and gracious with single parents?</p> <p>How likewise with children?</p> <p>Where can our written materials be more welcoming?</p> <p>Website? Grapevine newsletter?</p> <p>Are there parts of our worship service that can be more sensitive?</p>



## APPENDIX C

### HOPE COMMUNITY GATHERING MONTHLY TOPICS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
September 2018	Financial Assistance for Single Parents
October 2018	Medical Insurance for Single Parents
November 2018	Housing Assistance for Single Parents
December 2018	Making the most of Holidays as a Single Parent
January 2019	Nutrition and Food Assistance for Single Parents
February 2019	Preschool and Head Start for Single Parents
March 2019	Childcare Assistance for Single Parents
April 2019	Mental Health Resources for Single Parents
May 2019	Education and Job Training for Single Parents
June 2019	Vacationing on a Single-Parent Budget
July 2019	Exercise Ideas on a Single-Parent Budget

## APPENDIX D

### HOPE GUIDE OUTLINE

1. Introduction and How to Use This Guide
2. Your Family and Its Health
  - a. The Health Umbrella
  - b. Togetherness
  - c. Safety
  - d. Free From Injury or Disease
  - e. Living Well and Doing Well
  - f. Physical and Mental Wellness
  - g. Growth and Succeeding in Your Desires
  - h. Free From Disorder, Matters Reconciled
  - i. Good friendships
  - j. Contentment and satisfaction
3. Twenty-six Weekly Scriptures of Encouragement
4. Family Leadership for a Purpose
5. Goals for Your Family
6. Extended Family Care
7. Resources to Assist Your Family
8. Community Support
9. Prayer Journal

## APPENDIX E

### HOPE MINISTRY PARTNER SERVICES DIRECTORY DRAFT

#### Local

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##### Churches

First Presbyterian Church Upland  
869 N Euclid Ave Upland, CA 91786

Web: [www.fpc-upland.com](http://www.fpc-upland.com)

Phone: (909)982-8811

Contact: Pastor Noel Anderson

Resource/Service: Loaves and Fishes ministry to assist the needy with food, counseling, transportation, and temporary housing.

Community Baptist Church  
9090 19th St Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91701

Web: [www.findcommunity.com](http://www.findcommunity.com)

Phone: (909)945-5001

Contact: Pastor Rob Acker

Resource/Service: GAP Food bank, Assure Pregnancy Clinic

Hillside Community Church  
5354 Haven Ave. Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91737

Web: [hillsiderancho.com](http://hillsiderancho.com)

Phone: (909)980-2191

Contact: Pastor Aaron McRae

Resource/Service: Home repair, Meals ministry, Pilates, Single & Parenting, Families of Drug Addicts

Life Bible Fellowship Church  
2426 North Euclid Ave. Upland, CA 91784

Web: [lbf.church/home](http://lbf.church/home)

Phone: (909)981-4848

Contact: Pastor Gary Keith

Resource/Service: DivorceCare, Widows Support Group, LIFEcare ministry, GriefShare

United Methodist Church  
7690 Archibald Ave. Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

Web: <http://oldstonechurchumc.com>

Phone: (909)987-3214

Contact: Pastor Betty King, Connie Downs Missions & Community Outreach Leader  
Resource/Service: Support Community Connection and the Rancho Cucamonga Family Resource Center

First Baptist Church of Rancho Cucamonga  
7450 Archibald Ave. Rancho Cucamonga , CA 91730  
Web: <http://www.fbcfamily.net>  
Phone: (909)987-3676  
Contact: Cathy Schirano Outreach Ministries  
Resource/Service: Hope Food Pantry

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
6080 Haven Ave. Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91737  
Web: <http://www.soth.org>  
Phone: (909)989-6500  
Contact: Pastor Kevin Austin  
Resource/Service: Food ministry, homeless ministry, Community Connections Day, Parish nurse

St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
330 East 16th Street Upland, California 91784  
Web: <http://www.stmarksupland.org>  
Phone: (909)920-5565  
Contact: Pastor Keith Yamamoto  
Resource/Service: Support Foothill Family Shelter, Sunday collections, Breakfast Bags

Water of Life Church, City Link  
8440 Nuevo Avenue Fontana, CA 92335  
Web: [www.wateroflifecc.org/citylink-services](http://www.wateroflifecc.org/citylink-services)  
Phone: (909)803-1059  
Contact: Linda B  
Resource/Service: Transitional housing, Case management, Rental assistance, Utility assistance, Supportive services, Food

First Lutheran Church Fontana  
9315 Citrus Ave Fontana, CA 92355  
Web: TBD  
Phone: (909)823-3457  
Resource/Service: Food, Clothing, Assure Pregnancy testing and counseling

**Para-Church and Services**

Catholic Charities

904 E. California St Ontario, CA 91761

Web: [ccsbriv.org](http://ccsbriv.org)

Phone: (909)391-4882

Resource/Service: Emergency shelter, Case management, Rental assistance, Utility assistance, Supportive services

**Childcare**

Chaffey Child Development Center: <http://www.chaffey.edu/childctr/index.shtml>

**Domestic Violence**

House of Ruth

522 Fern Ave Ontario, CA 91762

Web: [www.houseofruthinc.org](http://www.houseofruthinc.org)

Phone: (909)623-4364

Resource/Service: Emergency shelter, Transitional housing, Permanent housing, Case management, Utility assistance, Food, Supportive services

**Education and Jobs Resources**

Chaffey College Financial Aid: <http://www.chaffey.edu/finaid/index.shtml>

**Emergency Resources**

The Salvation Army

1412 S. Euclid Ave Ontario, CA 91762

Web: [www1.usw.salvationarmy.org](http://www1.usw.salvationarmy.org)

Phone: (909)986-6748

Resource/Service: Emergency shelter, Supportive services

Mercy House

P.O. Box 9434 Ontario, CA 91762

Web: [mercyhouse.net](http://mercyhouse.net)

Phone: (909)460-6768

Resource/Service: Transitional housing, Case management, Rental assistance, Utility assistance,

Para Los Niños

531 N. Euclid Ave Ontario, CA 91762

Web: [www.paralosninos.org](http://www.paralosninos.org)

Phone: (909)230-6400

Resource/Service: Emergency shelter, Case management, Supportive services

Foothill Family Shelter  
1501 W. Ninth Street, Suite D Upland, CA 91786  
Web: [www.foothillfamilyshelter.org](http://www.foothillfamilyshelter.org)  
Phone: (909)920-0453  
Resource/Service: Transitional housing, Case management, Supportive services

Pacific Lifeline  
P.O. Box 1424 Upland, CA 91785  
Web: [www.pacific-lifeline.org](http://www.pacific-lifeline.org)  
Phone: (909)931-2624  
Resource/Service: Transitional housing, Case management, Supportive services

**Supportive services**

Inland Empire United Way  
9624 Hermosa Ave Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730  
Web: [www.ieuw.org](http://www.ieuw.org)  
Phone: (909)980-2857  
Resource/Services: Supportive services

**Family Resources**

Rancho Cucamonga Family Resource Center  
9791 Arrow Route Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730  
Web: <https://www.cityofrc.us/cityhall/cs/parks/facility/resource.asp>  
Phone: (909)477-2781  
Resource/Service: Food, clothing, counseling, support groups

**Food and Clothing Resources**

Inland Valley Hope Partners SOVA  
904 E. California St Ontario, CA 91761  
Web: [www.inlandvalleyhopepartners.org](http://www.inlandvalleyhopepartners.org)  
Phone: (909)391-4882  
Resource/Service: Food, Supportive services

Angels Who Care  
675 S. White Ave Pomona, CA 91767  
Web: [www.angelswhocare.org](http://www.angelswhocare.org)  
Phone: (909)214-7699  
Resource/Service: Food, Supportive services

Affirming Community Initiatives (ACI Ministries)  
9791 Arrow Route Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730  
Web: [www.aciministries.com](http://www.aciministries.com)

Phone: (909)609-1475  
Resource/Service: Food, Supportive services

Mountain View Family Development  
8833 Palmetto Ave Fontana, CA 92335  
Web: <https://mviewcc.org/mountain-view-family-development/>  
Phone: (900)357-9377  
Resource/Service: Food

Echoes of Faith Ontario  
11255 Central Ave Ontario, CA 91762  
Web: [www.kcm.org/church-listing/church/united-states-america/ca/ontario/echos-faith-world-outreach](http://www.kcm.org/church-listing/church/united-states-america/ca/ontario/echos-faith-world-outreach)  
Phone: (909)627-0927  
Resource/Service: Food

Ontario Christian Center  
1620 E. Hawthorne St Ontario, CA 91764  
Web: [ontariochristiancenter.org](http://ontariochristiancenter.org)  
Phone: (909)983-5269  
Resource/Service: Food

God Always Provides Food Bank Rancho Cucamonga  
8768 Helms Ave Suite A Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730  
Web: [www.yellowpages.com/rancho-cucamonga-ca/mip/gap-food-bank-ministries-6981893](http://www.yellowpages.com/rancho-cucamonga-ca/mip/gap-food-bank-ministries-6981893)  
Phone: (909)945-1020  
Resource/Service: Food

### **Legal Resources**

Inland Counties Legal Services  
10601 Civic Center Dr #260 Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730  
Web: [www.inlandlegal.org](http://www.inlandlegal.org)  
Phone: (909)980-0982  
Resource/Service: Legal support services

Inland Fair Housing and Mediation Board  
The City Center Building 10681 Foothill Blvd Suite 101 Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730  
Web: [www.ifhmb.com](http://www.ifhmb.com)  
Phone: (800)321-0911  
Resource/Service: Legal supportive services

**Housing**

Pomona Valley Habitat for Humanity  
2111 Bonita Ave B, La Verne, CA 91750  
Web: [www.habitat.org/us-ca/la-verne/pomona-valley-hfh](http://www.habitat.org/us-ca/la-verne/pomona-valley-hfh)  
Phone: (909) 596-7098  
Resource/Service: Permanent housing

Nabahood Community Development  
370 E. Holt Ave Pomona, CA 91767  
Web: [www.nabahood.org](http://www.nabahood.org)  
Phone: (909)489-0035  
Resource/Service: Permanent housing, Case management, Supportive services

**San Bernardino County**

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Portal  
Web: [211sb.org](http://211sb.org)  
Phone: 211  
Resource/Service: Access to thousands of community services, via web or 211 phone call, such as employment resources, free or low-cost health clinic, affordable parenting classes, counseling, financial counsel and assistance, after school activities, transportation.

Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County (CAPSBC)  
Web: [www.capsbc.org](http://www.capsbc.org)  
Phone: (900)723-1500  
Resource/Service: Food bank, Housing assistance, Tax assistance, Summer camp, School supplies, Transportation, Clothes, Hygiene, Educational resources, Vocational and employment resources, Budgeting resources, Emergency and disaster assistance, Home weatherization, Utility assistance

**Child Abuse**

San Bernardino Department of Children and Family Services  
Web: [hs.sbcounty.gov/cfs/AboutUs/Pages/How\\_to\\_report\\_child\\_abuse.aspx](http://hs.sbcounty.gov/cfs/AboutUs/Pages/How_to_report_child_abuse.aspx)  
Phone: (800)827-8724

**Child Support**

Department of Child Support Services (DCSS)  
10417 Mountain View Ave Loma Linda, CA 92354  
Web: [www.sbcounty.gov/dcsc](http://www.sbcounty.gov/dcsc)  
Phone: (866)901-3212



**Preschool Services**

San Bernardino Preschool Services Department

Web: [hs.sbcounty.gov/psd/Pages/default.aspx](http://hs.sbcounty.gov/psd/Pages/default.aspx)

Phone: (888)543-7025

**Job Resources**

San Bernardino Department of Workforce Development

Web: [www.csb-win.org/vosnet/Default.aspx](http://www.csb-win.org/vosnet/Default.aspx)

Phone: (800)451-5627

**Legal Aid**

Legal Aid Society of San Bernardino

588 W. Sixth St San Bernardino, CA 92410

Web: [legalaidofsb.org](http://legalaidofsb.org)

Phone: (909)889-7328

**Transitional Assistance**

San Bernardino Transitional Assistance Department

10825 Arrow Route Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

Web: [hs.sbcounty.gov/tad/Pages/Office-Locations.aspx](http://hs.sbcounty.gov/tad/Pages/Office-Locations.aspx)

Phone: (909)388-0245

YMCA of East Valley

316 Olive Ave, Redlands, CA 92379

Web: [ymcaeastvalley.org/find-a-y/legal-aid/services/](http://ymcaeastvalley.org/find-a-y/legal-aid/services/)

Phone: (909)798-9622

**Medical, Dental, Psychological Care**

First 5 San Bernardino

735 E. Carnegie Drive, Suite 150 San Bernardino, CA 92408

Web: [first5sanbernardino.org/Programs.aspx](http://first5sanbernardino.org/Programs.aspx)

Phone: (909)386-7706

**State of California**

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**Living Assistance for Families with Children (CalWORKS)**

Web: [www.cdss.ca.gov/CalWORKS](http://www.cdss.ca.gov/CalWORKS)

**Food Assistance (CalFresh)**

Web: [www.cdss.ca.gov/food-nutrition/calfresh](http://www.cdss.ca.gov/food-nutrition/calfresh)

**Childcare**

Web: [www.cdss.ca.gov/CalWORKs-Child-Care](http://www.cdss.ca.gov/CalWORKs-Child-Care)

**Kinship Guardianship Assistance**

Web: [www.cdss.ca.gov/Kinship-Assistance](http://www.cdss.ca.gov/Kinship-Assistance)

**Energy Assistance (Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP))**

Web: [www.csd.ca.gov/Services/HelpPayingUtilityBills.aspx](http://www.csd.ca.gov/Services/HelpPayingUtilityBills.aspx)

**Federal**

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**Domestic Violence**

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Web: [www.thehotline.com](http://www.thehotline.com)

Phone: (800)799-7233

**Food**

US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Web: [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility)

Phone: 703-305-2022

US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Web: [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic)

Phone: 703-305-2052

US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service

National School Breakfast Program (NSBP)

Web: [www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/school-breakfast-program-sbp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/school-breakfast-program-sbp)

Phone: 703-305-2054

US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

Web: [www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp)

Phone: 703-305-2054

US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service  
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)  
Web: [www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program)  
Phone: 703-305-2054

US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service  
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)  
Web: [www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/emergency-food-assistance-program-tefap](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/emergency-food-assistance-program-tefap)  
Phone: 703-305-2060

### **Healthcare**

US Department of Health and Human Services  
Medicaid & Children's Health Insurance Program  
Web: [www.insurekidsnow.gov](http://www.insurekidsnow.gov)  
Phone: (877)543-7669

### **Housing**

US Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Phone: (415) 489-6400  
Web: Affordable Housing Locator: <https://resources.hud.gov>  
Web: Rental Assistance: [https://www.hud.gov/topics/rental\\_assistance](https://www.hud.gov/topics/rental_assistance)  
Web: Avoiding Foreclosure: [https://www.hud.gov/topics/avoiding\\_foreclosure](https://www.hud.gov/topics/avoiding_foreclosure)  
Web: Buying a Home: [https://www.hud.gov/topics/buying\\_a\\_home](https://www.hud.gov/topics/buying_a_home)

### **School Readiness**

US Department of Health and Human Services  
Cucamonga Head Start  
9324 San Bernardino Rd Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730  
Web: [www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/616](http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/616)  
Phone: (909)383-2078

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